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THE

PHILOSOPHY

OF

RHETORIC.

BOOK II.

CHAP. IV.

Some grammatical Doubts in regard to English Construction stated and examined.

BEFORE I dismiss this article altogether, it will not be amiss to consider a little some dubious points in construction, on which our critics appear not to be agreed.

One of the most eminent of them makes this remark upon the neuter verbs: "A neuter verb "cannot become a passive. In a neuter verb the "agent and the object are the same, and cannot "be separated even in imagination; as in the ex- "amples *to sleep, to walk;* but when the verb is "passive, one thing is acted upon by another,

"really or by supposition different from it*." To this is subjoined in the margin the following note: "That some neuter verbs take a passive form, but "without a passive signification, has been observ- "ed above. Here we speak of their becoming "both in form and signification passive, and shall "endeavour further to illustrate the rule by ex- "ample. *To split*, like many other English verbs, "has both an active and a neuter signification; ac- "cording to the former we say, The force of gun- "powder *split* the rock; according to the latter, "The ship *split* upon the rock:—and converting "the verb active into a passive, we may say, The "rock was *split* by the force of gunpowder; or, "The ship was *split* upon the rock. But we can- "not say with any propriety, turning the verb "neuter into a passive, The rock *was split* upon "by the ship."

This author's reasoning, so far as concerns verbs properly neuter, is so manifestly just, that it commands a full assent from every one that understands it. I differ from him only in regard to the application. In my apprehension, what may grammatically be named the neuter verbs, are not near so numerous in our tongue as he imagines. I do not enter into the difference between verbs absolutely neuter, and intransitively active. I concur with him in thinking, that

* Short Introduction, &c. Sentences.

this distinction holds more of metaphysics than of grammar. But by verbs grammatically neuter, I mean such as are not followed either by an accusative, or by a preposition and a noun; for I take this to be the only grammatical criterion with us. Of this kind is the simple and primitive verb *to laugh;* accordingly to say *he was laughed,* would be repugnant alike to grammar and to sense. But give this verb a regimen, and say, *To laugh at,* and you alter its nature, by adding to its signification. It were an abuse of words to call this a neuter, being as truly a compound active verb in English, as *deridere* is in Latin, to which it exactly corresponds in meaning. Nor doth it make any odds that the preposition in the one language precedes the verb, and is conjoined with it, and in the other follows it, and is detached from it. The real union is the same in both. Accordingly *he was laughed at* is as evidently good English, as *derisus fuit* is good Latin.

Let us hear this author himself, who, speaking of verbs compounded with a preposition, says expressly, "In English the preposition is more "frequently placed after the verb, and separate "from it, like an adverb; in which situation it "is no less apt to affect the sense of it, and to "give it a new meaning; and may still be con-"sidered as belonging to the verb, and a part of "it. As, *to cast* is to throw; but *to cast up,* or "to compute, *an account,* is quite a different thing;

" thus, *to fall on, to bear out, to give over*, &c."
Innumerable examples might be produced, to show that such verbs have been always used as active or transitive compounds, call them which you please, and therefore as properly susceptible of the passive voice. I shall produce only one authority, which, I am persuaded, the intelligent reader will admit to be a good one. It is no other than this ingenious critic himself, and the passage of his which I have in view will be found in the very quotation above made. " When the " verb is passive, one thing *is acted upon* by ano- " ther." Here the verb *to act upon* is undoubtedly neuter, if the verb *to split upon* be neuter in the expression censured; and conversely, the verb *to split upon* is undoubtedly active, if the verb *to act upon* be active in the passage quoted. Nor can any thing be more similar than the construction. " One thing *is acted upon* by another."—" The " rock *is split upon* by the ship."

After all, I am sensible that the latter expression is liable to an exception, which cannot be made against the former. I therefore agree with the author in condemning it, but not in the reason of pronouncing this sentence. The only reason that weighs with me is this. The active sense of the simple verb *to split*, and the sense of the compound *to split upon*, are, in such a phrase as that above mentioned, apt to be confounded. Nay, what is more, the false sense is that which

is first suggested to the mind, as if the rock and not the ship had been *split*. And though the subsequent words remove the ambiguity, yet the very hesitancy which it occasions, renders the expression justly chargeable, though not with solecism, with what is perhaps worse, obscurity and inelegance.

That we may be satisfied, that this and no other is the genuine cause of censure, let us borrow an example from some verb, which in the simple form is properly univocal. *To smile* is such a verb, being a neuter, which, in its primitive and uncompounded state, never receives an active signification; but *to smile on* is with us, according to the definition given above, a compound active verb, just as *arridere** (to which it corresponds alike in etymology and meaning) is in Latin. Accordingly, we cannot say, *he was smiled*, in any sense. But to say, *he was smiled on*, as in the following example, "He was *smiled on* by fortune in every "stage of life," is entirely unexceptionable. Yet the only difference between this and the phrase above criticised, ariseth hence, that there is something ambiguous in the first appearance of the

* I know that the verb *arrideo* is accounted neuter by Latin lexicographers. The reason lies not in the signification of the word, but purely in this circumstance, that it governs the dative and not the accusative. But with this distinction we have no concern. That it is active in its import is evident from this, that it is used by good authors in the passive.

one, which is not to be found in the other. And, indeed, when the simple and primitive verb has both an active signification and a neuter, (as is the case with the verb *split*), such an ambiguous appearance of the compound in the passive, as in invariable consequence.

I shall observe further, in order to prevent mistakes on this subject, that there are also in our language compound neuter, as well as compound active verbs. Such are, *to go up, to come down, to fall out.* These properly have no passive voice; and though some of them admit a passive form, it is without a passive signification. Thus *he is gone up*, and *he has gone up*, are nearly of the same import. Now the only distinction in English between the active compound and the neuter compound, is this; the preposition in the former, or more properly the compound verb itself, hath a regimen, in the latter it hath none. Indeed these last may be further compounded, by the addition of a preposition with a noun, in which case, they also become active or transitive verbs; as in these instances, "He *went up to* her;" "She *fell out with* them." Consequently, in giving a passive voice to these there is no solecism. We may say, "She *was* "*gone up to* by him;" "They *were fallen out* "*with* by her." But it must be owned, that the passive form, in this kind of decomposite verbs, ought always to be avoided as inelegant, if not

obscure. By bringing three prepositions thus together, one inevitably creates a certain confusion of thought; and it is not till after some painful attention, that the reader discovers two of the prepositions to belong to the preceding verb, and the third to the succeeding noun. The principal scope of the foregoing observations on the passage quoted from Dr Lowth, is to point out the only characteristical distinction between verbs neuter and verbs active, which obtains in our language.

To these I shall subjoin a few things, which may serve for ascertaining another distinction in regard to verbs. When a verb is used impersonally, it ought undoubtedly to be in the singular number, whether the neuter pronoun be expressed or understood; and when no nominative in the sentence can regularly be construed with the verb, it ought to be considered as impersonal. For this reason, analogy as well as usage favour this mode of expression, "The conditions of the agreement were *as fol-* "*lows*;" and not *as follow*. A few late writers have inconsiderately adopted this last form through a mistake of the construction. For the same reason we ought to say, "I shall consider "his censures so far only as *concerns* my friend's "conduct;" and not "so far as *concern*." It is manifest that the word *conditions* in the first case, and *censures* in the second, cannot serve as

nominatives. If we give either sentence another turn, and instead of *as*, say *such as*, the verb is no longer impersonal. The pronoun *such* is the nominative, whose number is determined by its antecedent. Thus we must say, 'They were 'such as follow,'——'such of his censures on-'ly as concern my friend.' In this I entirely concur with a late anonymous remarker on the language.

I shall only add on this subject, that the use of impersonal verbs was much more frequent with us formerly than it is now. Thus *it pleaseth me, it grieveth me, it repenteth me,* were a sort of impersonals, for which we should now say, *I please, I grieve, I repent. Methinks* and *methought* at present, as *meseemeth* and *meseemed* anciently, are, as Johnson justly supposes, remains of the same practice*. It would not be easy to conjecture what hath misled some writers so far as to make them adopt the uncouth term *methoughts*, in contempt alike of usage and of analogy, and even without any colourable pretext that I can think of, for *thoughts* is no part of the verb at all.

I shall now consider another suspected idiom in English, which is the indefinite use sometimes made of the pronoun *it*, when applied in the several ways following: first, to persons as well as to things;

* The similar use of impersonal verbs, and the *il me semble* of the French, render this hypothesis still more probable.

secondly, to the first person and the second, as well as to the third; and thirdly, to a plural as well as to a singular. Concerning the second application and the third, Dr Johnson says in his Dictionary, "This mode of speech, though used "by good authors, and supported by the *il y a* "of the French, has yet an appearance of barbar- "ism." Dr Lowth doubts only of the third application. "The phrase," says he, "which oc- "curs in the following examples, though pretty "common, and authorised by custom, yet seems "to be somewhat defective in the same way." He had been specifying inaccuracies arising from disagreement in number. The examples alluded to are,

'Tis these that early taint the female soul *.

'Tis they that give the great Atrides' spoils;
'Tis they that still renew Ulysses' toils †.

———Who was't came by?
'Tis two or *three*, my Lord, that bring you word,
Macduff is fled to England ‡.

Against the first application, to persons as well as to things, neither of these critics seems to have any objection; and it must be owned, that they express themselves rather sceptically than dogmatically, about the other two. Yet, in my judgment, if one be censurable, they all are censurable, and if one be proper, they all are proper.

* Pope. † Prior. ‡ Shakespeare.

The distinction of genders, especially with us, is as essential as the distinction of persons or that of numbers. I say, especially with us, because, though the circumstances be few wherein the gender can be marked, yet, in those few, our language, perhaps more than any other tongue, follows the dictates of pure Nature. The masculine pronoun *he* it applies always to males, or at least to persons (God and angels, for example) who in respect of dignity are conceived as males; the feminine *she* to females; and unless where the style is figurative, the neuter *it* to things either not susceptible of sex, or in which the sex is unknown. Besides, if we have recourse to the Latin syntax, the genuine source of most of our grammatical scruples, we shall find there an equal repugnancy to all the applications above rehearsed *.

But, to clear up this matter as much as possible, I shall recur to some remarks of the last mentioned critic, concerning the significations and the uses of the neuter *it*. "The pronoun *it*," he tells us, "is sometimes employed to express; first, the "subject of any inquiry or discourse; secondly, "the state or condition of any thing or person; "thirdly, the thing, whatever it be, that is the "cause of any effect or event, or any person con- "sidered merely as a cause, without regard to

* In Latin *id fuit ille* would be as gross a solecism, as *id fuit ego*, or *id fuit vos*.

" proper personality." In illustration of the third use, he quotes these words,

> You heard her say herself, *it was* not *I*——
> *'Twas I* that kill'd her——*.

The observations of this author concerning the neuter pronoun, are, as far as they go, unexceptionable. He ought to have added to the word *personality*, in the third use, the words *gender or number*. The example which he hath given, shows that there is no more regard to *gender*, than to *personality*; and that there ought to be no more regard to *number*, than to either of the former, may be evinced from the considerations following.

When a personal pronoun must be used indefinitely, as in asking a question whereof the subject is unknown, there is a necessity of using one person for all the persons, one gender for all the genders, and one number for both numbers. Now in English, custom hath consigned to this indefinite use, the third person, the neuter gender, and the singular number. Accordingly, in asking a question, nobody censures this use of the pronoun, as in the interrogation, *Who is it?* Yet by the answer it may be found to be *I* or *he*, *one* or *many*. But whatever be the answer, if the question be proper, it is proper to begin the answer by expressing the subject of inquiry in the same indefinite

* Shakespeare.

manner wherein it was expressed in the question. The words *it is* are consequently pertinent here, whatever be the words which ought to follow, whether *I* or *he*, *we* or *they**. Nay, this way of beginning the answer by the same indefinite expression of the subject that was used in the question, is the only method authorised in the language, for connecting these two together, and showing that what is asserted, is an answer to the question asked. And if there be nothing faulty in the expression, when it is an answer to a question actually proposed, there can be no fault in it, where no question is proposed. For every answer, that is not a bare assent or denial, ought, independently of the question, to contain a proposition grammatically enunciated; and every affirmation or negation ought to be so enunciated, as that it might be an answer to a question. Thus by a very simple sorites it can be proved, that if the pronoun *it* may be used indefinitely in one case, it may in every case. Nor is it possible to conceive even the shadow of a reason, why one number may not as well serve indefinitely for both numbers, as one person for all the persons, and one gender for all the genders.

That which hath made more writers scrupulous about the first of these applications than about the other two, is, I imagine, the appearance not of the

* In this observation I find I have the concurrence of Dr Priestley.

pronoun, but of the substantive verb in the singular adjoined to some term in the plural. In order to avoid this supposed incongruity, the translators of the Bible have in one place stumbled on a very uncouth expression. "Search the scriptures, "for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and "*they are they* which testify of me*." In the other applications they have not hesitated to use the indefinite pronoun *it*, as in this expression: "*It is I*, be not afraid†." Yet the phrase *they are they* in the first quotation, adopted to prevent the incongruous adjunction of the verb in the singular, and the subsequent noun or pronoun in the plural, is, I suspect, no better English, than the phrase *I am I* would have been in the second, by which they might have prevented the adjunction not less incongruous of the third person of the verb to the first personal pronoun. If there be any difference in respect of congruity, the former is the less incongruous of the two. The latter never occurs, but in such passages as those above quoted; whereas nothing is commoner than to use the substantive verb as a copula to two nouns differing in number; in which case it generally agrees with the first. "His *meat* "*was locusts* and wild honey‡," is a sentence which I believe nobody ever suspected to be ungrammatical. Now as every noun may be repre-

* John v. 39. † Matt. xiv. 27. ‡ Matt. iii. 4.

sented by a pronoun, what is grammatical in those, must, by parity of reason, be grammatical in these also. Had the question been put, "What was "his meat?" the answer had undoubtedly been proper, "It was locusts and wild honey." And this is another argument which in my apprehension is decisive.

But "this comes," as Dr Lowth expresseth himself in a similar case, "of forcing the Eng-"lish under the rules of a foreign language, "with which it has little concern*." A convenient mode of speech which custom hath established, and for which there is pretty frequent occasion, ought not to be hastily given up, especially when the language doth not furnish us with another equally simple and easy to supply its place. I should not have entered so minutely into the defence of a practice sufficiently authorised by use, but in order, if possible, to satis-

* The English hath little or no affinity in structure either to the Latin or to the Greek. It much more resembles the modern European languages, especially the French. Accordingly we find in it an idiom very similar to that which hath been considered above. I do not mean the *il y a*, because the *a* is part of an active verb, and the words that follow in the sentence, are its regimen; consequently no agreement in person and number is required. But the idiom to which I allude is the *il est*, as used in the following sentence, "*Il est des animaux* qui semblent reduits au toucher; "*il en est qui semblent* participer a nôtre intelligence." Contemplation de la nature par Bonnet. I am too zealous an advocate for English independency, to look on this argument as conclusive. But I think it more than a sufficient counterpoise to all that can be pleaded on the other side from the syntax of the learned languages.

fy those critics, who, though both ingenious and acute, are apt to be rather more scrupulous on the article of language, than the nature of the subject will admit. In every tongue there are real anomalies which have obtained the sanction of custom; for this at most hath been reckoned only dubious. There are particularly some in our own, which have never, as far as I know, been excepted against by any writer, and which, nevertheless, it is much more difficult to reconcile to the syntactic order, than that which I have been now defending. An example of this is the use of the indefinite article, which is naturally singular, before adjectives expressive of number, and joined with substantives in the plural. Such are the phrases following, *a few persons, a great many men, a hundred* or *a thousand ships.*

There is another point, on which, as both the practice of writers, and the judgment of critics, seem to be divided, it may not be improper to make a few remarks. It is the way of using the infinitive after a verb in the preterite. Some will have it that the verb governed ought to be in the past, as well as the verb governing; and others that the infinitive ought to be in what is called the present, but what is in fact indefinite in regard to time. I do not think that on either side the different cases have been distinguished with sufficient accuracy. A very little atten-

tion will, I hope, enable us to unravel the difficulty entirely.

Let us begin with the simplest case, the infinitive after the present of the indicative. When the infinitive is expressive of what is conceived to be either future in regard to the verb in the present, or contemporary, the infinitive ought to be in the present. Thus, "I intend *to write* "to my father to-morrow." "He seems *to be* a "man of letters." In the first example the verb *to write*, expresses what is future in respect of the verb *intend*. In the second the verb *to be* expresses what is equally present with the verb *seems*. About the propriety of such expressions there is no doubt. Again, if the infinitive after the verb in the present, be intended to express what must have been antecedent to that which is expressed by the governing verb, the infinitive must be in the preterperfect, even though the other verb be in the present. Thus, "From his "conversation he appears *to have studied* Homer "with great care and judgment." To use the present in this case, and say, "He appears *to* "*study* Homer"——would overturn the sense.

The same rule must be followed when the governing verb is in the preterite; for let it be observed, that it is the tense of the governing verb only that marks the absolute time; the tense of the verb governed marks solely its relative time with respect to the other. Thus I should say, "I always in-

"tended *to write* to my father, though I have not "yet done it." "He seemed *to be* a man of let- "ters." "From a conversation I once had with "him, he appeared *to have studied* Homer with "great care and judgment." Propriety plainly requires, that in the two first instances the infinitive should be in the present tense, and in the third instance, in the preterite.

Priestley has not expressed himself on this subject with precision. *I found him better than I expected to find him*, is the only proper analogical expression. *Expected to have found him*, is irreconcilable alike to grammar and to sense. Indeed all verbs expressive of hope, desire, intention, or command, must invariably be followed by the present and not the perfect of the infinitive. Every body would perceive an error in this expression: "It is long since I commanded "him to have done it." Yet *expected to have found* is no better. It is as clear that the *finding* must be posterior to the expectation, as that the *obedience* must be posterior to the command. But though the anonymous remarker formerly quoted is in the right as to the particular expressions criticised by him, he decides too generally, and seems to have imagined that in no case ought the preterperfect of the infinitive, to follow the preterite of the indicative. If this was his opinion, he was egregiously mistaken. It is however agreed on both sides, that, in order to ex-

press the past with the defective verb *ought*, we must use the perfect of the infinitive, and say for example, "he ought to *have done* it;" this in that verb being the only possible way of distinguishing the past from the present.

There is only one other observation of Dr Lowth, on which, before I conclude this article, I must beg leave to offer some remarks. "Phrases "like the following, though very common, are "improper: Much depends upon the *rule's be-* "*ing observed;* and error will be the consequence "of *its being neglected.* For here is a noun and "a pronoun representing it, each in the posses- "sive case, that is, under government of another "noun, but without other noun to govern it: "for *being observed,* and *being neglected,* are not "nouns: nor can you supply the place of the "possessive case by the preposition *of* before the "noun or pronoun *." For my part, notwithstanding what is here very speciously urged, I am not satisfied that there is any fault in the phrases censured. They appear to me to be perfectly in the idiom of our tongue, and such as on some occasions could not easily be avoided, unless by recurring to circumlocution, an expedient which invariably tends to enervate the expression. But let us examine the matter more nearly.

* Introduction, &c. Sentences, Note on the 6th Phrase.

This author admits that the active participle may be employed as a noun, and has given some excellent directions regarding the manner in which it ought to be construed, that the proper distinction may be preserved between the noun and the gerund. Phrases like these, therefore, he would have admitted as unexceptionable, "Much depends upon *their observing* of the rule, "and error will be the consequence of *their ne-* "*glecting* of it." Now, though I allow both the modes of expression to be good, I think the first simpler and better than the second. Let us consider whether the former be liable to any objections, which do not equally affect the latter.

One principal objection to the first is, "You "cannot supply the place of the possessive case "by the preposition *of* before the noun or pro- "noun." Right; but before you draw any conclusion from this circumstance, try whether it will not equally affect both expressions; for if it does, both are on this account to be rejected, or neither. In the first, the sentence will be made to run this, "Much depends upon *the being ob-* "*served of* the rule, and error will be the conse- "quence of *the being neglected of* it." Very bad without question. In the second, thus, "Much "depends upon *the observing of them* of the rule, "and error will be the consequence of *the neglect-* "*ing of them* of it." Still worse. But it may be thought that as, in the last example, the partici-

pial noun gets a double regimen, this occasions all the impropriety and confusion. I shall therefore make the experiment, on a more simple sentence. "Much will depend on *your pupil's composing*, but "more on *his reading* frequently." Would it be English to say, "Much will depend on *the com-* "*posing of your pupil*, but more on *the reading of* "*him* frequently?"—No certainly. If this argument then prove any thing, it proves too much, and consequently can be no criterion.

The only other objection mentioned is, that "*being observed* and *being neglected*, are not nouns." It is acknowledged that, in the common acceptation of the word, they are not nouns, but passive participles; neither is the active participle commonly a noun, neither is the infinitive of the verb active or passive, a noun. Yet the genius of the tongue permits that all these may be construed as nouns in certain occurrences. The infinitive in particular is employed substantively when it is made either the nominative or the regimen of a verb. Now in this way not the infinitive only, but along with it all the words in construction are understood as one compound noun, as in the examples following: "*To love God and our neigh-* "*bour* is a duty incumbent on us all," and "The "gospel strongly inculcates on us this important "lesson, *to love God and our neighbour*." But in no other situation can such clauses supply the place of nouns. They are never used in con-

struction with other nouns followed by a preposition. The quotation brought from Spenser is, I suspect, a mere Grecism, which was not in his time more than it is at present conformable to the English idiom. *For* is the only preposition that seems ever to have been construed with such clauses, after another verb. And even this usage is now totally laid aside.

I am of opinion, therefore, upon the whole, that as the idiom in question is analogical, supported by good use, and sometimes very expedient, it ought not to be entirely reprobated.

CHAP. V.

Of the qualities of Style strictly rhetorical.

PURITY, of which I have treated at some length in the two preceding chapters, may justly be denominated grammatical truth. It consisteth in the conformity of the expression to the sentiment which the speaker or the writer intends to convey by it, as moral truth consisteth in the conformity of the sentiment intended to be conveyed, to the sentiment actually entertained by the speaker or the writer; and logical truth, as was hinted above, in the conformity of the sentiment to the nature of things. The opposite to logical truth, is properly error; to moral truth, a lie; to grammatical truth a blunder. Now the only

standard by which the conformity implied in grammatic truth must be ascertained in every language, is, as hath been evinced *, reputable, national, and present use, in that language.

But it is with the expression as with the sentiment, it is not enough to the orator that both be true. A sentence may be a just exhibition, according to the rules of the language, of the thought intended to be conveyed by it, and may therefore, to a mere grammarian, be unexceptionable; which to an orator may appear extremely faulty. It may, nevertheless, be obscure, it may be languid, it may be inelegant, it may be flat, it may be unmusical. It is not ultimately the justness either of the thought or of the expression, which is the aim of the orator; but it is a certain effect to be produced in the hearers. This effect as he purposeth to produce in them by means of language, which he makes the instrument of conveying his sentiments into their minds, he must take care in the first place that his style be perspicuous, that so he may be sure of being understood. If he would not only inform the understanding, but please the imagination, he must add the charms of vivacity and elegance, corresponding to the two sources from which, as was observed in the beginning of this work †, the merit of an address of this kind results. By viva-

* Vol. I. B. II. Chap. i. † Vol. I. Book I. Chap.

city, resemblance is attained; by elegance, dignity of manner. For as to the dignity of the subject itself, or thing imitated, it concerns solely the thought. If he purposes to work upon the passions, his very diction, as well as his sentiments, must be animated. Thus, language and thought, like body and soul, are made to correspond, and the qualities of the one exactly to cooperate with those of the other.

But though the perfection of the body consists, as was formerly observed*, in its fitness for serving the purposes of the soul, it is at the same time capable of one peculiar excellence as a visible object. The excellence I mean is *beauty*, which evidently implies more than what results from the fitness of the several organs and members for answering their respective ends. That there is a beauty in the perceived fitness of means to their end, and instruments to their use, is uncontrovertible. All that I contend for here is, that this is not the whole of what is implied in the term *beauty*. The eyes of one person may be much inferior in this respect to those of another, though equally fit for all the purposes of vision. The like may be said of every other feature. Analogous to this there is an excellence of which language is susceptible as an audible object, distinct from its aptitude for conveying the senti-

* Vol. I. Book I. Chap. iv.

ments of the orator with light and energy into the minds of the hearers. Now as *music* is to the ear what *beauty* is to the eye, I shall, for want of a more proper term, denominate this excellence in style, its music; though I acknowledge the word is rarely used with so great latitude.

Thus it appears, that beside *purity*, which is a quality entirely grammatical, the five simple and original qualities of style, considered as an object to the understanding, the imagination, the passions, and the ear, are *perspicuity*, *vivacity*, *elegance*, *animation*, and *music*.

CHAP. VI.

Of Perspicuity.

Of all the qualities above mentioned, the first and most essential is *perspicuity**. Every speaker doth not propose to please the imagination, nor is every subject susceptible of those ornaments which conduce to this purpose. Much less is it the aim of every speech to agitate the passions. There are some occasions, therefore, on which vivacity, and many on which animation of style are not necessary; nay, there are occasions on which the last especially would be improper. But whatever be the

* Prima est eloquentiæ virtus perspicuitas. QUINT.

ultimate intention of the orator, to inform, to convince, to please, to move, or to persuade, still he must speak so as to be understood, or he speaks to no purpose. If he do not propose to convey certain sentiments into the minds of his hearers, by the aid of signs intelligible to them, he may as well declaim before them in an unknown tongue. This prerogative the intellect has above all the other faculties, that whether it be or be not immediately addressed by the speaker, it must be regarded by him either ultimately or subordinately; ultimately, when the direct purpose of the discourse is information, or conviction; subordinately, when the end is pleasure, emotion or persuasion.

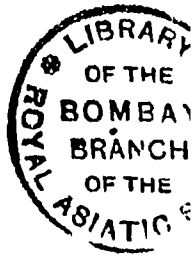
There is another difference also between perspicuity and the two last mentioned qualities, vivacity and animation, which deserves to be remarked. In a discourse wherein either or both of these are requisite, it is not every sentence that requires, or even admits them; but every sentence ought to be perspicuous. The effect of all the other qualities of style is lost without this. This being to the understanding what light is to the eye, ought to be diffused over the whole performance. In this respect it resembles grammatical purity, of which I have already treated, but it is not in this respect only that it resembles it. Both are best illustrated by showing the different ways wherein they may be lost. It

is: for these reasons that, though perspicuity be more properly a rhetorical than a grammatical quality, I thought it better to include it in this book, which treats of the foundations and essential or universal properties of elocution, than to class it with those which are purely discriminative of particular styles.

Indeed, if language were capable of absolute perfection, which it evidently is not; if words and things could be rendered exact counterparts to each other; if every different thing in nature had a different symbol by which it were expressed; and every difference in the relations of things had a corresponding difference in the combinations of words, purity alone would secure perspicuity, or rather these two would entirely coincide. To speak grammatically would, in that case, convey infallibly and perspicuously the full meaning of the speaker, if he had any meaning, into the mind of every hearer who perfectly understands the language. There would not be even a possibility of mistake or doubt. But the case is widely different with all the languages that ever were, are, or will be in the world.

Grammatical purity, in every tongue, conduceth greatly to perspicuity, but it will by no means secure it. A man may in respect of it speak unexceptionably, and yet speak obscurely, or ambiguously; and though we cannot say, that a man may speak properly, and at the same

time speak unintelligibly, yet this last case falls more naturally to be considered as an offence against perspicuity, than as a violation of propriety. For when the meaning is not discovered, the particular impropriety cannot be pointed out. In the three different ways, therefore, just now mentioned, perspicuity may be violated.



SECTION I.

The Obscure.

PART I.—*From Defect.*

This is the first offence against perspicuity, and may arise from several causes. First, from some defect in the expression. There are in all languages certain elliptical expressions, which use hath established, and which, therefore, very rarely occasion darkness. When they do occasion it, they ought always to be avoided. Such are, in Greek and Latin, the frequent suppression of the substantive verb, and of the possessive pronouns; I was going to add, and of the personal pronouns also: but, on reflection, I am sensible, that, in the omission of them in the nominative, there is properly no ellipsis, as the verb, by its in-

flection, actually expresses them. Accordingly, in these languages, the pronoun in the nominative is never rightly introduced, unless when it is emphatical. But the idiom of most modern tongues, English and French particularly, will seldom admit such ellipsis*. In Italian and Spanish they are pretty frequent.

Often, indeed, the affectation of conciseness, often the rapidity of thought natural to some writers, will give rise to still more material defects in the

* The French I imagine, have gone to the other extreme. They require in many instances a repetition of pronouns, prepositions, and articles, which, as they add nothing to the perspicuity, must render the expression languid. There are some cases in which this repetition is consequential on the very construction of their language. For example, we say properly in English, *my father and mother*; because the possessive pronoun having no distinction of gender, and so having but one form, is alike applicable to both: the case being different with them renders it necessary to follow a different rule, and to say, *mon pere et ma mere*. But it is not to instances of this sort that the rule is limited. Custom with them hath extended it to innumerable cases, wherein there is no necessity from construction. With us it is enough to say, "She was robbed *of her* "*clothes and jewels*." With them the preposition and the pronoun must both be repeated, *de ses habits et de ses joiaux*. Again, with them it is not sufficient to say, 'The woman *whom you know and love*,' but *whom you know and whom you love—que vous connoissez et que vous aimez*. In like manner, the relatives in French must never be omitted. They often are in English, and when the omission occasions no obscurity, it is not accounted improper. An expression like this would in their tongue be intolerable; "You are obliged *to say and do all you can*." It must be "*to say and to do all that which you can*,"—de dire et de faire tout ce que vous savez. But though in several instances the critics of that nation have refined on their language to excess, and by needless repetitions have sometimes enervated the expression, their criticisms, when useful in assisting us to shun any obscurity or ambiguity, deserve to be adopted.

expression. Of these I shall produce a few examples: "He is inspired," says an eminent writer, "with a true *sense of that function*, when chosen "from a regard to the interests of piety and virtue *." *Sense* in this passage denotes an inward feeling, or the impression which some sentiment makes upon the mind. Now a function cannot be a sentiment impressed or felt. The expression is therefore defective, and ought to have been,—"He is inspired with a true sense of the dignity, "or of the importance of that function."—"You ought to contemn all the wit in the world "against you †."—As the writer doth not intend to signify that all the wit in the world is actually exerted against the person whom he addresses, there is a defect in the expression, though perhaps it will be thought chargeable with redundancy at the same time. More plainly thus, "You ought to contemn all the wit that can be "employed against you." "He talks all the "way up stairs to a visit ‡." There is here also a faulty omission, which, if it cannot be said to obscure the sense, doth at least withhold that light whereof it is susceptible. If the word *visit* ever meant person or people, there would be an ambiguity in the sentence, and we should imagine this the object talked to; but as that cannot be the case, the expression is rather to be accounted lame, there being no verb in it with which the

* Guardian, No. 13. † Ib. No. 63. ‡ Spect. No. 2.

words to *a visit* can be construed. More explicitly thus, "He talks all the way as he walks up "stairs to make a visit." "Arbitrary power," says an elegant writer, "I look upon as a greater "evil than anarchy itself, as much as a savage is a "happier state of life than a slave at the oar *." Neither savage nor slave can be denominated a state of life, though the states in which they live may properly be compared. "This courage a-"mong the adversaries of the court," says the same writer in another piece, "was inspired into "them by various incidents, for every one of "which, I think, the ministers, or, if that was "the case, the minister alone is to answer †." *If that was the case*, Pray, what is he supposing to have been the case? To the relative *that* I can find no antecedent, and am left to guess that he means, *if there was but one minister*. "When a "man considers not only an ample fortune, but "even the very necessaries of life, his pretence "to food itself at the mercy of others, he cannot "but look upon himself in the state of the dead, "with his case thus much worse, that the last "office is performed by his adversaries instead of "his friends ‡." There is a double ellipsis in this sentence. You must first supply *as being* before

* Sentiments of a Church of England man.
† Free Thoughts on the Present State of Affairs.
‡ Spectator, No. 456. T.

the words *at the mercy*, and insert *as* before *in the state of the dead.* "I beg of you," says Steele, "never let the glory of our nation, who made "France tremble, and yet has the gentleness to "be unable to bear opposition from the meanest "of his own countrymen, be calumniated in so "impudent a manner, as in the insinuation that "he affected a perpetual dictatorship*." At first reading, one is at a loss to find an antecedent to the pronouns *who*, *his*, and *he*. On reflection, one discovers that the phrase *the glory of our nation* is figurative, and denotes a certain illustrious personage. The trope is rather too adventurous, without some softening clause, to suit the idiom of our tongue. The sense would have appeared immediately, had he said, "Never let the "man, who may justly be styled the glory of our "nation——."

The instances now given will suffice to specify the obscurities in style which arise from deficiency. The same evil may also be occasioned by excess. But as this almost invariably offends against vivacity, and only sometimes produceth darkness, there will be a more proper occasion of considering it afterwards. Another cause of obscurity is a bad choice of words. When it is this alone which renders the sentence obscure, there

* Guardian, No. 53.

is always ground for the charge of impropriety, which hath been discussed already.

PART II.—*From bad Arrangement.*

Another source of obscurity is a bad arrangement of the words. In this case the construction is not sufficiently clear. One often, on first hearing the sentence, imagines, from the turn of it, that it ought to be construed one way, and on reflection finds that he must construe it another way. Of this, which is a blemish too common even in the style of our best writers, I shall produce a few examples: "It contained," says Swift, "a "warrant for conducting me and my retinue to "Traldragdubb or Trildrogdrib, for it is pronoun-"ced both ways, as near as I can remember, *by* "*a party of ten horse**." The words *by a party of ten horse* must be construed with the participle *conducting*, but they are placed so far from this word, and so near the verb *pronounced*, that at first they suggest a meaning perfectly ludicrous. "I had several men died in my ship *of* calen-"tures†." The preposition *of* must be construed with the verb *died*, and not, as the first appearance would suggest, with the noun *ship* immediately preceding. More clearly thus, "I had "several men in my ship who died of calentures." I shall remark, by the way, that though the rela-

* Voyage to Laputa. † Voyage to the Houyhnhnms.

tives *who* and *which* may, agreeably to the English idiom, be sometimes omitted in the oblique cases, to omit them in the nominative, as in the passage last quoted, almost always gives a maimed appearance to the expression. "I perceived it had "been scowered *with half an eye**." The situation of the last phrase, which is besides a very bad one, is liable to the same exception. "I "have hopes that when Will confronts him, and "*all the ladies in whose behalf he engages him*, cast "kind looks and wishes of success at their cham- "pion, he will have some shame†." It is impossible not to imagine, on hearing the first part of the sentence, that Will is to confront all the ladies—, though afterwards we find it necessary to construe this clause with the following verb. This confusion is removed at once by repeating the adverb *when*, thus, "I have hopes that when "Will confronts him, and when all the ladies "cast kind looks——." The subsequent sentence is liable to the same exception: "He ad- "vanced against the fierce ancient, imitating his "address, his pace and career, *as well as the vi-* "*gour of his horse*, and his own skill would allow‡." The clause *as well as the vigour of his horse*, appears at first to belong to the former part of the sentence, and is afterwards found to belong to

* Guardian, No. 10. † Spectator, No. 20.

‡ Battle of the Books.

the latter. In all the above instances of bad arrangement, there is what may be justly termed a constructive ambiguity; that is, the words are so disposed in point of order, as would render them really ambiguous, if, in that construction which the expression first suggests, any meaning were exhibited. As this is not the case, the faulty order of the words cannot properly be considered, as rendering the sentence ambiguous, but obscure.

It may indeed be argued, that, in these and the like examples, the least reflection in the reader will quickly remove the obscurity. But why is there any obscurity to be removed? Or why does the writer require more attention from the reader, or the speaker from the hearer, than is absolutely necessary? It ought to be remembered, that whatever application we must give to the words, is, in fact, so much deducted from what we owe to the sentiments. Besides, the effort that is exerted in a very close attention to the language, always weakens the effect which the thoughts were intended to produce in the mind. "By perspicuity," as Quintilian justly observes, "care is taken, not that the hearer *may* "understand, if he will; but that he *must* understand, whether he will or not *." Perspicuity originally and properly implies *transparency*, such

* Non ut intelligere possit, sed ne omnino possit non intelligere curandum. Instit. Lib. viii. Cap. 2.

as may be ascribed to air, glass, water, or any other medium, through which material objects are viewed. From this original and proper sense it hath been metaphorically applied to language, this being, as it were, the medium, through which we perceive the notions and sentiments of a speaker. Now, in corporeal things, if the medium through which we look at any object be perfectly transparent, our whole attention is fixed on the object; we are scarcely sensible that there is a medium which intervenes, and can hardly be said to perceive it. But if there be any flaw in the medium, if we see through it but dimly, if the object be imperfectly represented, or if we know it to be misrepresented, our attention is immediately taken off the object, to the medium. We are then desirous to discover the cause, either of the dim and confused representation, or of the misrepresentation of things which it exhibits, that so the defect in vision may be supplied by judgment. The case of language is precisely similar. A discourse, then, excels in perspicuity, when the subject engrosses the attention of the hearer, and the diction is so little minded by him, that he can scarcely be said to be conscious that it is through this medium he sees into the speaker's thoughts. On the contrary, the least obscurity, ambiguity, or confusion in the style, instantly removes the attention from the sentiment to the expression, and the hearer endeavours, by the aid of reflection, to

correct the imperfections of the speaker's language.

So much for obviating the objections which are frequently raised against such remarks as I have already made, and shall probably hereafter make, on the subject of language. The elements which enter into the composition of the hugest bodies, are subtile and inconsiderable. The rudiments of every art and science exhibit at first, to a learner, the appearance of littleness and insignificancy. And it is by attending to such reflections, as to a superficial observer would appear minute and hypercritical, that language must be improved, and eloquence perfected *.

I return to the causes of obscurity, and shall only further observe, concerning the effect of bad arrangement, that it generally obscures the sense, even when it doth not, as in the preceding instances, suggest a wrong construction. Of this the following will suffice for an example: "The "young man did not want natural talents; but "the father of him was a coxcomb, who affected "being a fine gentleman so unmercifully, that he "could not *endure* in his sight, or the frequent "*mention* of *one*, who was his son, growing into "manhood, and thrusting him out of the gay "world †." It is not easy to disentangle the construction of this sentence. One is at a loss

* The maxim *Natura se potissimum prodit in minimis*, is not confined to physiology.

† Spect. No. 196. T.

at first to find any accusative to the active verb *endure;* on further examination it is discovered to have two, the word *mention*, and the word *one*, which is here closely combined with the preposition *of*, and makes the regimen of the noun *mention*. I might observe also the vile application of the word *unmercifully*. This, together with the irregularity of the reference, and the intricacy of the whole, renders the passage under consideration, one of those which may, with equal justice, be ranked under *solecism, impropriety, obscurity*, or *inelegance*.

PART III.—*From using the same word in different senses.*

Another source of obscurity, is when the same word is in the same sentence used in different senses. This error is exemplified in the following quotation: "That he should be in earnest it is "hard to conceive; since any reasons of doubt, "which he might have in this case, would have "been reasons of doubt in the case of other men, "who may give *more*, but cannot give *more evi-* "*dent*, signs of thought than their fellow-crea- "tures*." This errs alike against perspicuity and elegance; the word *more* is first an adjective, the comparative of *many;* in an instant it is an adverb, and the sign of the comparative degree.

* Bolingb. Ph. Ex. i. Sect. 9.

As the reader is not apprized of this, the sentence must appear to him, on the first glance, a flat contradiction. Perspicuously either thus, "who may give *more numerous*, but cannot give "*more evident* signs——," or thus, "who may "give *more*, but cannot give *clearer* signs."

It is but seldom that the same pronoun can be used twice or oftener in the same sentence, in reference to different things, without darkening the expression. It is necessary to observe here, that the signification of the personal, as well as of the relative pronouns, and even of the adverbs of place and time, must be determined by the things to which they relate. To use them, therefore, with reference to different things, is in effect to employ the same word in different senses; which, when it occurs in the same sentence, or in sentences closely connected, is rarely found entirely compatible with perspicuity. Of this I shall give some examples. "One may "have an air *which* proceeds from a just sufficien- "cy and knowledge of the matter before him, "*which* may naturally produce some motions of "his head and body, *which* might become the "bench better than the bar*." The pronoun *which* is here thrice used in three several senses; and it must require reflection to discover, that the first denotes an *air*, the second *sufficiency and*

* Guardian, No. 13.

knowledge, and the third *motions of the head and body*. Such is the use of the pronouns *those* and *who* in the following sentence of the same writer: "The sharks, *who* prey upon the inadvertency of "young heirs, are more pardonable than *those*, "*who* trespass upon the good opinion of *those*, "*who* treat with them upon the foot of choice "and respect *." The same fault here renders a very short sentence at once obscure, inelegant, and unmusical. The like use of the pronoun *they* in the following sentence, almost occasions an ambiguity: "*They* were persons of such moder- "ate intellects, even before *they* were impaired "by *their* passion †."—The use made of the pronoun *it* in the example subjoined, is liable to the same exception: "If *it* were spoken with never "so great skill in the actor, the manner of utter- "ing that sentence could have nothing in *it*, "which could strike any but people of the great- "est humanity, nay, people elegant and skilful "in observations upon *it* ‡." To the preceding examples I shall add one wherein the adverb *when*, by being used in the same manner, occasions some obscurity: "He is inspired with a true "sense of that function, *when* chosen from a re- "gard to the interests of piety and virtue, and a "scorn of whatever men call great in a transitory

* Guardian, No. 73. † Spect. No. 20. ‡ Ib. No. 509.

" being, *when* it comes in competition with what " is unchangeable and eternal *."

PART IV.—*From an uncertain reference in pronouns and relatives.*

A cause of obscurity also arising from the use of pronouns and relatives, is when it doth not appear at first to what they refer. Of this fault I shall give the three following instances: " There " are other examples," says Bolingbroke, " of the " same kind, which cannot be brought without " the utmost horrour, because in them it is sup- " posed impiously, against principles as self-evi- " dent as any of those necessary truths, which " are *such* of all knowledge, that the supreme " Being commands by one law, what he forbids " by another †." It is not so clear as it ought to be, what is the antecedent to *such*. Another from the same author, " The laws of Nature are " truly what my Lord Bacon styles his aphorisms, " laws of laws. Civil laws are always imperfect, " and often false deductions from *them*, or appli- " cations of *them*; nay, *they* stand in many in- " stances in direct opposition to *them* ‡." It is not quite obvious, on the first reading, that the pronoun *them* in this passage doth always refer to the laws of Nature, and *they* to civil laws.

* Guardian, No. 13. † Bolingb. Phil. Fr. 20.
‡ Phil. Fr. 9.

"When a man considers the state of his own "mind, about which every member of the Chris- "tian world is supposed at this time to be em- "ployed, he will find that the best defence a- "gainst vice, is preserving the worthiest part of "his own spirit pure from any great offence a- "gainst *it* *." It must be owned that the dark- ness of this sentence is not to be imputed solely to the pronoun.

PART V.—*From too artificial a structure of the sentence.*

Another cause of obscurity is when the structure of the sentence is too much complicated, or too artificial; or when the sense is too long suspended by parentheses. Some critics have been so strongly persuaded of the bad effect of parentheses on perspicuity, as to think they ought to be discarded altogether. But this, I imagine, is also an extreme. If the parenthesis be short, and if it be introduced in a proper place, it will not in the least hurt the clearness, and may add both to the vivacity and to the energy of the sentence. Others, again, have carried their dislike to the parenthesis only so far as to lay aside the hooks by which it is commonly distinguished, and to use commas in their place. But this is not avoiding the fault, if it be a fault, it is only endeavouring to commit it so as to escape discovery, and

* Guardian, No. 19.

may therefore be more justly denominated a corruption in writing than an improvement. Punctuation, it will readily be acknowledged, is of considerable assistance to the reading and pronunciation. No part of a sentence requires to be distinguished by the manner of pronouncing it, more than a parenthesis; and consequently, no part of a sentence ought to be more distinctly marked in the pointing.

PART VI.—*From technical terms.*

Another source of darkness in composing, is the injudicious introduction of technical words and phrases, as in the following passage:

> Tack to the larboard, and stand off to sea,
> Veer starboard sea and land———*.

What an absurd profusion, in an epic poem too, of terms which few beside seamen understand! In strict propriety, technical words should not be considered as belonging to the language; because not in current use, nor understood by the generality even of readers. They are but the peculiar dialect of a particular class. When those of that class only are addressed, as in treatises on the principles of their art, it is admitted, that the use of such terms may be not only convenient, but

* Dryden's Æneid.

even necessary. It is allowable also in ridicule, if used sparingly, as in comedy and romance.

PART VII.—*From long sentences.*

The last cause of obscurity I shall take notice of, is very long sentences. This rarely fails to be conjoined with some of the other faults before mentioned. The two subsequent quotations from two eminent writers, will serve sufficiently to exemplify more than one of them. The first is from Bolingbroke's Philosophy: "If we are so, "contrary to all appearances (for they denote "plainly one single system, all the parts of which "are so intimately connected and dependent one "on another, that the whole begins, proceeds, "and ends together), this union of a body and a "soul must be magical indeed, as Doctor Cud- "worth calls it, so magical, that the hypothesis "serves to no purpose in philosophy, whatever it "may do in theology; and is still less compre- "hensible, than the hypothesis which assumes, "that although our idea of thought be not includ- "ed in the idea of matter or body, as the idea of "figure is, for instance, in that of limited exten- "sion; yet the faculty of thinking, in all the modes "of thought, may have been superadded by Om- "nipotence, to certain systems of matter: which "it is not less than blasphemy to deny; though "divines and philosophers, who deny it in terms, "may be cited; and which, whether it be true or

" no, will never be proved false by a little meta-
" physical jargon about essences, and attributes,
" and modes *." The other quotation is from Swift's letter to the Lord High Treasurer, containing a proposal for correcting, improving, and ascertaining the English tongue: " To this suc-
" ceeded that licentiousness which entered with
" the Restoration, and from infecting our religion
" and morals, fell to corrupt our language, (which
" last was not like to be much improved by
" those who at that time made up the court of
" King Charles the Second; either such who had
" followed him in his banishment; or who had
" been altogether conversant in the dialect of
" those fanatic times; or young men who had
" been educated in the same company), so that
" the court (which used to be the standard of
" propriety and correctness of speech) was then
" (and, I think, hath ever since continued) the
" worst school in England for that accomplish-
" ment; and so will remain, till better care be
" taken in the education of our young nobility,
" that they may set out into the world with some
" foundation of literature, in order to qualify
" them for patterns of politeness." There are indeed, cases in which even a long period will not create obscurity. * When this happens, it may almost always be remarked, that all the principal

* Essay. i. Section 2.

members of the period are similar in their structure and would constitute so many distinct sentences, if they were not united by their reference to some common clause in the beginning or the end.

Section II.

The double meaning.

It was observed, that perspicuity might be violated, not only by obscurity, but also by double meaning. The fault in this case is not that the sentence conveys darkly or imperfectly the author's meaning, but that it conveys also some other meaning, which is not the author's. His words are susceptible of more than one interpretation. When this happens, it is always occasioned, either by using some expression which is equivocal; that is, hath more meanings than one affixed to it; or by ranging the words in such an order, that the construction is rendered equivocal, or made to exhibit different senses. To the former, for distinction's sake, I shall assign the name of equivocation; to the latter, I shall appropriate that of ambiguity.

Part I. *Equivocation.*

I begin with the first. When the word equivocation denotes, as in common language it generally denotes, the use of an equivocal word phrase, or other ambiguity, with an inten

deceive, it doth not differ essentially from a lie. This offence falls under the reproof of the moralist, not the censure of the rhetorician. Again, when the word denotes, as agreeably to etymology it may denote, that exercise of wit which consists in the playful use of any term or phrase in different senses, and is denominated *pun*, it is amenable indeed to the tribunal of criticism, but cannot be regarded as a violation of the laws of perspicuity. It is neither with the liar nor with the punster that I am concerned at present. The only species of equivocation that comes under reprehension here, is that which takes place, when an author undesignedly employs an expression susceptible of a sense different from the sense he intends to convey by it.

In order to avoid this fault, no writer or speaker can think of disusing all the homonymous terms of the language, or all such as have more than one signification. To attempt this in any tongue, ancient or modern, would be to attempt the annihilation of the greater part of the language; for, in every language, the words strictly univocal will be found to be the smaller number. But it must be admitted, as a rule in elocution, that equivocal terms ought ever to be avoided, unless where their connexion with the other words of the sentence instantly ascertains the meaning. This, indeed, the connexion is often so capable of effecting, that the hearer will never

reflect that the word is equivocal, the true sense being the only sense which the expression suggests to his mind. Thus the word *pound* signifies both the sum of *twenty shillings sterling*, and the weight of *sixteen ounces avoirdupois*. Now if you should tell me, that you rent a house at fifty *pounds*, or that you have bought fifty *pounds* of meat in the market, the idea of weight will never present itself to my mind in the one case, or the idea of money in the other. But it frequently happens, through the inadvertency of writers, that the connected words in the sentence do not immediately ascertain the sense of the equivocal term. And though an intelligent reader may easily find the sense on reflection, and, with the aid of the context, we may lay it down as a maxim, that an author always offends against perspicuity, when his style requires that reflexion from his reader. But I shall proceed to illustrate, by examples, the fault of which I am treating. An equivocation, then, may be either in a single word or in a phrase.

As to the former, there is scarcely any of the parts of speech, in which you will not find equivocal terms. To begin with particles; the preposition *of* denotes sometimes the relation which any affection bears to its subject; that is, the person whose affection it is; sometimes the relation which it bears to its object. Hence this expression of the apostle hath been observed to be equivocal: "I am persuaded that neither

"death nor life——shall be able to separate us "from the love *of* God*." By *the love of God*, say interpreters, may be understood, either *God's love to us*, or *our love to God*. It is remarkable, that the genitive case in the ancient languages, and the prepositions corresponding to that case in the modern languages, are alike susceptible of this double meaning. Only as to our own language, we may observe in passing, that of late the preposition *of* is more commonly put before the subject, and *to* before the object of the passion. But this is not the only way in which the preposition *of* may be equivocal. As it sometimes denotes the relation of the effect to the cause, sometimes that of the accident to the subject, from this duplicity of signification, there will also, in certain circumstances, arise a double sense. You have an example in these words of Swift: "A little after the reformation *of* Lu- "ther†."—It may indeed be doubted, whether this should not rather be called an impropriety, since *the reformation of a man* will suggest much more readily a change wrought *on* the man, than a change wrought *by* him. And the former of these senses it could not more readily suggest, if the expression in that sense were not more conformable to use.*

* Romans, viii. 38, &c. † Mechan. Operat.

My next instance shall be in the conjunctions: "They were both much more ancient among the "Persians than Zoroaster *or* Zerdusht*." The *or* here is equivocal. It serves either as a copulative to synonymous words, or as a disjunctive of different things. If, therefore, the reader should not know that Zoroaster and Zerdusht mean the same person, he will mistake the sense. In coupling appellatives, there is not the same hazard, it being generally manifest to those who know the language, whether the words coupled have the same signification. If, nevertheless, in any case it should be doubtful, an attention to the ensuing rules may have its utility. If the first noun follows an article, or a preposition, or both, the article or the preposition, or both, should be repeated before the second, when the two nouns are intended to denote different things; and should not be repeated, when they are intended to denote the same thing. If there be neither article nor preposition before the first, and if it be the intention of the writer to use the particle *or* disjunctively, let the first noun be preceded by *either*, which will infallibly ascertain the meaning. On the contrary, if, in such a dubious case, it be his design to use the particle as a copulative to synonymous words, the piece will rarely sustain a material injury, by his omitting both the conjunction and the synonyma.

* Bol. Subst. of Letters to Mr de Pouilly.

The following is an example in the pronouns: "She united the great body of the people in *her* "and their common interest*." The word *her* may be either the possessive pronoun, or the accusative case of the personal pronoun. A very small alteration in the order totally removes the doubt. Say, "in their and *her* common interest." The word *her* thus connected, can be only the possessive, as the author doubtless intended it should be, in the passage quoted.

An example in substantives: "Your Majesty "has lost all hopes of any future excises by "their *consumption*†." The word *consumption* has both an active sense and a passive. It means either the act of consuming, or the state of being consumed. Clearly thus: "Your Majesty "has lost all hopes of levying any future excises "on what they shall consume."

In adjectives: "As for such animals as are "*mortal* or noxious, we have a right to destroy "them‡." Here the false sense is suggested more readily than the true. The word *mortal*, therefore, in this sentence, might justly be considered as improper; for though it sometimes means destructive, or causing death, it is then almost invariably joined with some noun expressive of hurt or danger. Thus we say, a *mortal*

* Idea of a Patriot King. † Guardian, No. 52.
‡ Guardian, No. 61.

poison, a *mortal wound*, a *mortal disease*, or a *mortal enemy*; but the phrases *mortal creature*, *mortal animal*, or *mortal man*, are always understood to imply creature, animal, or man, *liable to death*.

In verbs: "The next refuge was to say, it "was *overlooked* by one man, and many passages "wholly written by another*." The word *overlooked* sometimes signifies *revised*, and sometimes *neglected*. As it seems to be in the former sense that this participle is used here, the word *revised* ought to have been preferred. Another instance in verbs: "I have furnished the house "exactly according to your fancy, or, if you "please, my own; for I have long since learnt "to like nothing but what you *do*†." The word *do* in this passage may be either the auxiliary, or, as it might be termed, the supplementary verb, and be intended only to supersede the repetition of the verb *like*; or it may be the simple active verb, which answers to the Latin *facere*, and the French *faire*.

In the next quotation the homonymous term may be either an adjective or an adverb, and admits a different sense in each acceptation:

Not *only* Jesuits can equivocate‡.

If the word *only* is here an adverb, the sense is

* Spect. No. 19. † Ibid. No. 627.

‡ Dryden's Hind and Panther.

"To equivocate is not the only thing that Je-
"suits can do." This interpretation, though not the author's meaning, suits the construction. A very small alteration in the order gives a proper and unequivocal, though a prosaic expression of this sense: "Jesuits can not only equivocate." ——Again, if the word *only* is here an adjective (and this doubtless is the author's intention), the sense is, "Jesuits are not the only persons "who can equivocate." But this interpretation suits ill the composition of the sentence. The only other instance of this error in single words I shall produce, is one in which, on the first glance, there appears room to doubt whether a particular term ought to be understood literally or metaphorically. The word *handled* in the following passage will illustrate what I mean: "Thus much "I thought fit to premise, before I resume the sub-
"ject, which I have already *handled*, I mean the "naked bosoms of our British ladies*." Sometimes, indeed, a thing like this may be said archly and of design, in which case it falls not under this animadversion.

It was remarked above, that there are not only equivocal words in our language, but equivocal phrases. *Not the least*, and *not the smallest*, are of this kind. They are sometimes made to imply *not any*; as though one should say, *not*

* Guardian, No. 116.

even the least, not so much as the smallest; and sometimes again to signify *a very great*, as though it were expressed in this manner, *far from being the least or smallest*. Thus they are susceptible of two significations that are not only different but contrary. We have an instance in the following passage: "Your character of uni-"versal guardian, joined to the concern you "ought to have for the cause of virtue and re-"ligion, assure me, you will not think that cler-"gymen, when injured, have *the least* right to "your protection*." This sentence hath also the disadvantage taken notice of in some of the preceding quotations, that the sense not intended by the writer occurs to the reader much more readily than the author's real meaning. *Nothing less than* is another phrase which, like the two former, is susceptible of opposite interpretations. Thus, "He aimed at *nothing less than* the "crown," may denote either, "Nothing was "less aimed at by him than the crown;" or, "Nothing inferior to the crown could satisfy "his ambition." All such phrases ought to be totally laid aside. The expression *will have mercy* is equivocal in the following passage of the vulgar translation of the Bible: "I *will have mercy*, "and not sacrifice †." The expression commonly denotes "I will exercise mercy;" whereas it is in this place employed to signify "I require

* Guardian, No. 80. † Matt. ix. 13.

"others to exercise it." The sentiment, therefore, ought to have been rendered here, as we find it expressed in the prophetical book alluded to, "I desire mercy and not sacrifice*." When the phrase in question happens to be followed by the preposition *on* or *upon* before the object, there is nothing equivocal in it, the sense being ascertained by the connection.

So much for equivocal words and phrases.

Part II.—*Ambiguity.*

I come now to consider that species of *double meaning* which ariseth, not from the use of equivocal terms, but solely from the construction, and which I therefore distinguished by the name of *ambiguity*. This, of all the faults against perspicuity, it is in all languages the most difficult to avoid. There is not one of the parts of speech which may not be so placed, as that, agreeably to the rules of grammar, it may be construed with different parts of the sentence, and by consequence made to exhibit different senses. Besides, a writer intent upon his subject, is less apt to advert to those imperfections in his style which occasion ambiguity, than to any other. As no term or phrase he employs, doth of itself suggest

* Hos. vi. 6.

the false meaning, a manner of construing his words different from that which is expressive of his sentiment, will not so readily occur to his thoughts: and yet this erroneous manner of construing them, may be the most obvious to the reader. I shall give examples of ambiguities in most of the parts of speech, beginning with the pronouns.

As the signification of the pronouns (which by themselves express only some relation) is ascertained merely by the antecedent to which they refer, the greatest care must be taken, if we would express ourselves perspicuously, that the reference be unquestionable. Yet the greatest care on this article will not always be effectual. There are no rules which either have been, or I suspect, can be devised in any language, that will in all circumstances fix the relations of the pronouns in such a manner as to prevent ambiguity altogether. I shall instance first in the pronoun *who*; begging that the reader will observe its application in the two following sentences: "Solomon the son of David, *who* built the "temple of Jerusalem, was the richest monarch "that ever reigned over the people of God;" "and Solomon the son of David *who* was per-"secuted by Saul, was the richest monarch—." In these two sentences, the *who* is similarly situated; yet, in the former, it relates to the person first mentioned; in the latter, to the se-

cond. But this relation to the one or to the other, it would be impossible for any reader to discover, who had not some previous knowledge of the history of those kings. In such cases, therefore, it is better to give another turn to the sentence. Instead of the first, one might say, "Solomon the son of David, and the builder of "the temple of Jerusalem, was the richest mo-"narch."——The conjunction *and* makes the following words relate entirely to Solomon, as nothing had been affirmed concerning David. It is more difficult to avoid the ambiguity in the other instance, without adopting some circumlocution that will flatten the expression. In the style that prevailed in this island about two centuries ago, they would have escaped the ambiguous construction in some such way as this "So-"lomon, the son of David, even of him whom "Saul persecuted, was the richest——" But this phraseology has to modern ears, I know not what air of formality that renders it intolerable. Better thus, "Solomon, whose father Da-"vid was persecuted by Saul, was the richest—." The following quotation exhibits a triple sense, arising from the same cause, the indeterminate use of the relative:

> Such were the centaurs of Ixion's race,
> *Who* a bright cloud for Juno did embrace *.

* Denham's Progress of Learning.

Was it *the centaurs*, or *Ixion*, or *his race*, that embraced the cloud? I cannot help observing further on this passage, that the relative ought grammatically, for a reason to be assigned afterwards, rather to refer to *centaurs* than to either of the other two, and least of all to *Ixion*, to which it was intended to refer *.

But there is often an ambiguity in the relatives *who*, *which*, *that*, *whose*, and *whom*, even when there can be no doubt in regard to the antecedent. This arises from the different ways wherein the latter is affected by the former. To express myself in the language of grammarians, these pronouns are sometimes explicative, sometimes determinative. They are explicative, when

* Let it not be imagined that in this particular our tongue has the disadvantage of other languages. The same difficulty, as far as my acquaintance with them reaches, affects them all; and even some modern tongues in a higher degree than ours. In English, one is never at a loss to discover whether the reference be to persons or to things. In French and Italian the expression is often ambiguous in this respect also. In a French devotional-book I find this pious admonition:—"Conservez-vous dans l'amour "de Dieu, qui peut vous garantir de toute chute." I ask whether the antecedent here be *l'amour* or *Dieu*, since the relative *qui* is of such extensive import as to be applicable to either. The expression would be equally ambiguous in Italian, "Conservatevi nell' amor di Dio, che vi può conservare "senza intoppo." In English, according to the present use, there would be no ambiguity in the expression. If the author meant to ascribe this energy to the devout affection itself, he would say, "Keep yourselves in the "love of God, *which* can preserve you from falling;" if to God the great object of our love, he would say, "*who* can preserve you."- This convenient distinction was not, however, uniformly observed with us till about the middle of the last century.

they serve merely for the illustration of the subject, by pointing out either some property or some circumstance belonging to it, leaving it, however, to be understood in its full extent. Of this kind are the following examples: "Man, "who is born of woman, is of few days and full "of trouble." "Godliness, which with content-"ment is great gain, has the promise both of the "present life and of the future." The clause, "who is born of woman," in the first example, and "which with contentment is great gain" in the second, point to certain properties in the antecedents, but do not restrain their signification. For, should we omit these clauses altogether, we could say with equal truth, "Man is of few "days and full of trouble." "Godliness has the "promise both of the present life and of the "future." On the other hand, these pronouns are determinative, when they are employed to limit the import of the antecedent, as in these instances: "The man that endureth to the "end, shall be saved." "The remorse, which "issues in reformation, is true repentance." Each of the relatives here confines the signification of its antecedent to such only as are possessed of the qualification mentioned. For it is not affirmed of every man that he shall be saved; nor of all remorse, that it is true repentance.

From comparing the above examples, it may be fairly collected, that with us the definite article is of great use for discriminating the explicative sense from the determinative. In the first case it is rarely used, in the second it ought never to be omitted, unless when something still more definitive, such as a demonstrative pronoun, supplies its place *. The following passage is faulty in this respect: "I know that *all words which*

* In this respect the articles are more subservient to perspicuity in our tongue than in many others. In French, a writer must give the article indiscriminately in all the instances above specified. Thus, "L'homme, qui "est né de la femme, vit très-peu de tems, et il est rempli de miseres;" and "L'homme, qui perseverera jusqu'à *la* fin, sera sauvé." In like manner, "La pieté, qui jointe avec le contentement est un grand gain, a les "promesses de la vie presente, et de celle qui est à venir;" and "Le re- "mors, qui aboutit à la reformation, est le vrai repentir." The like indistinctness will be found to obtain in Italian and some other modern languages, and arises, in a great measure, from their giving the article almost invariably to abstracts. In some instances, there appears of late a tendency in writers, especially on politics, to give up this advantage entirely; not by adding the article to abstracts, but (which equally destroys the distinction) by omitting it when the term has a particular application. How often do we now find, even in books, such phrases as the following? "This was "an undertaking too arduous for private persons unaided by government." "It is hard to say what measure administration will next adopt." As in both cases it is the present government and the present administration of the country of the author that is meant, these nouns ought to have the definite article prefixed to them, and can scarcely be called English without it. The former of these words is indeed frequently used in the abstract, in which case it never has the article, as thus. "Government is absolutely "necessary in all civilized societies." "He published tracts on various "subjects, on religion, government, trade, &c." Abuses, such as that here criticised, greatly hurtful to perspicuity and precision, arise first in conversation, thence they creep into newspapers, thence into pamphlets, and at last unwarily find admission into books.

"are signs of complex ideas, furnish matter of "mistake and cavil *." As *words*, the antecedent, has neither the article nor a demonstrative pronoun to connect it with the subsequent relative, it would seem that the clause "which are "signs of complex ideas," were merely explicative, and that the subject *words* were to be understood in the utmost latitude. This could not be the writer's sense, as it would be absurd to affirm of all words, that they are signs of complex ideas. He ought therefore to have said either, "I know "that all *the* words *which* are signs of complex "ideas,"——or "I know that all *those* words "*which* are signs——" Either of these ways makes the clause beginning with the relative serve to limit the import of the antecedent.

There are certain cases, it must be owned, wherein the antecedent would require the article, even though the relative were intended solely for explication, as in these words of the psalmist: "My goodness extendeth not to thee; but to the "saints, and to the excellent ones, in whom is "all my delight †." The last clause is probably not restrictive, the words *saints* and *excellent ones* necessarily requiring the article. Now when such antecedents are followed by a determinative, they ought, for distinction's sake, to be at-

* Bolingbroke's Dissertation on Parties, Let. 12.

† Psalm xvi. 2, 3.

tended with the demonstrative pronoun, as thus, "——but to *those* saints, and to *those* excellent "ones in *whom*——."

Through not attending to this circumstance, the translators of the Bible have rendered the following passage ambiguous, even in regard to the antecedent: "There stood by me this night "the angel of God, *whose* I am, and *whom* I "serve *." The relatives here *whose* and *whom* refer more regularly to *angel* than to *God*. This, however, is not agreeable to the sense of the apostle. The words, therefore, ought to have been translated "——an angel of *the* God," or "——of *that* God, *whose* I am, and *whom* I serve †." For though the term *god* in strict propriety can be applied only to one, and may therefore be thought to stand on the same footing with proper names, it is in the common way of using it, an appellative, and follows the construction of appellatives. Thus we say, "the God of Abra-"ham," "the God of armies." Besides, Paul in the passage quoted was speaking to heathens; and this circumstance gives an additional propriety to the article.

For an instance of ambiguity in the construction of the pronoun *his*, I shall borrow an example from a French grammarian ‡; for though an

* Acts xxvii. 23.

† Αγγελος του Θεου, ου ειμι και ω λατρευω.

‡ Buffier.

equivocal word can rarely be translated by an equivocal word, it is very easy, when two languages have a considerable degree of similarity in their structure and analogy, to transfer an ambiguity from one to the other. The instance I mean is this, "Lisias promised to his father never "to abandon *his* friends." Were they his own friends, or his father's, whom Lisias promised never to abandon? This sentence rendered literally would be ambiguous in most modern tongues *. In the earliest and simplest times, the dramatic manner in which people were accustomed to relate the plainest facts, served effectually to exclude all ambiguities of this sort from their writings. They would have said, "Lisias gave a promise to his father in these "words, I will never abandon *my friends*," if they were his own friends of whom he spoke; "*your friends*," if they were his father's. It is, I think, to be regretted, that the moderns have too much departed from this primitive simplicity. It doth not want some advantages, beside that of perspicuity. It is often more picturesque, as well as more affecting; though, it must be owned, it requires so many words, and such frequent repetitions of *he said, he answered*, and the like,

* It would not be ambiguous in Latin. The distinction which obtains in that tongue between the pronouns *suus* and *ejus*, would totally preclude all doubt.

that the dialogue, if long, is very apt to grow irksome. But it is at least pardonable to adopt this method occasionally, where it can serve to remove an ambiguity. As the turn which Buffier gives the sentence in French, in order to avoid the double meaning, answers equally well in English, I shall here literally translate it. On the first supposition, "Lisias, speaking of his "friends, promised to his father, never to aban- "don them.", On the second supposition, "Li- "sias, speaking of his father's friends, promised to "his father, never to abandon them *."

* I even think, that the turn of the sentence is easier in English than in French: "Lisias, parlant des amis de son pere à son pere même, lui pro- "mit de ne les abandonner jamais." It may be thought that, on the first supposition, there is a shorter way of removing the doubt. *Ses propres amis* in French, and *his own friends* in English, would effectually answer the end. But let it be observed, that the introduction of this appropriating term hath an exclusive appearance with regard to others, that might be very unsuitable. I observe further, that the distinction in English between *his* and *her*, precludes several ambiguities that affect most other European tongues. Suppose the promise had been made to the mother instead of the father, the simple enunciation of it would be equally ambiguous in French, as in the other case. "Lisias promit à sa mere de n'abandoner jamais *ses* amis," is their expression, whether they be *his* friends or *hers*, of whom he speaks. If it were a daughter to her father, the case would be the same with them, but different with us. I may remark here, by the way, how much more this small distinction in regard to the antecedent conduces to perspicuity, than the distinctions of gender and number in regard to the nouns with which they are joined. As to this last connection, the place of the pronoun always ascertains it, so that, for this purpose at least, the change of termination is superfluous.

It is easy to conceive, that, in numberless instances, the pronoun *he* will, in like manner, be ambiguous, when two or more males happen to be mentioned in the same clause of a sentence. In such a case, we ought always either to give another turn to the expression, or to use the noun itself, and not the pronoun; for when the repetition of a word is necessary, it is not offensive. The translators of the Bible have often judiciously used this method; I say judiciously, because, though the other method be on some occasions preferable, yet, by attempting the other, they would have run a much greater risk of destroying that beautiful simplicity, which is an eminent characteristic of the language of holy writ. I shall take an instance from the speech of Judah to his brother Joseph in Egypt: "We said "to my lord, The lad cannot leave his father; "for if he should leave his father, his father "would die*." The words *his father* are in this short verse thrice repeated, and yet are not disagreeable, as they contribute to perspicuity. Had the last part of the sentence run thus, "If he "should leave his father, he would die," it would not have appeared from the expression, whether it was the child or the parent that would die. Some have imagined, that the pronoun ought always regularly to refer to the nearest preceding noun of

* Gen. xliv. 22.

the same gender and number. But this notion is founded in a mistake, and doth not suit the idiom of any language ancient or modern. From the rank that some words maintain in the sentence, if I may be allowed that expression, a reader will have a natural tendency to consider the pronoun as referring to them, without regard to their situation. In support of this observation, I shall produce two examples. The first shall be of the neuter singular of the third personal pronoun: "But I shall leave this subject to your ma-"nagement, and question not but you will throw "*it* into such lights, as shall at once improve and "entertain your reader*." There is no ambiguity here, nor would it, on the most cursory reading, enter into the head of any person of common sense, that the pronoun *it* relates to *management*, which is nearer, and not to *subject*, which is more remote. Nor is it the sense only that directs us in this preference. There is another principle by which we are influenced. The accusative of the active verb is one chief object of attention in a sentence; the regimen of that accusative hath but a secondary value; it is regarded only as explanatory of the former, or at most as an appendage to it. This consideration doth not affect those only who understand grammar, but all

* Spect. No. 628.

who understand the language. The different parts of speech, through the power of custom, produce their effect on those who are ignorant of their very names, as much as on the grammarian himself; though it is the grammarian alone who can give a rational account of these effects. The other example I promised to give, shall be of the masculine of the same number and person, in the noted complaint of Cardinal Wolsey immediately after his disgrace:

> Had I but serv'd my God, with half the zeal
> I serv'd my king; *he* would not in mine age
> Have left me naked to mine enemies *.

Here though the word *king* is adjoining, and the word *God* at some distance, the pronoun *he* cannot so regularly refer to that noun as to this. The reason is, the whole of the second clause beginning with these words, "with half the zeal," maintains but a subordinate rank in the sentence, as it is introduced in explication of the first, and might be omitted, not indeed without impairing, but without destroying the sense. Yet neither the rank in the sentence, nor the nearness of position, will invariably determine the import of the relative. Sometimes, indeed, as was observed by the French author last quoted, the sense of the words connected is sufficient to remove the ambiguity, though the reader should have no previous knowledge of the subject. And doubt-

* Shakespeare. Henry VIII.

less, it is equally reasonable to admit a construction which, though naturally equivocal, is fixed by the connection, as to admit an equivocal term, the sense whereof is in this manner ascertained. Of an ambiguity thus removed, the following will serve for an example: "Alexander "having conquered Darius, made himself master "of *his* dominions." *His* may refer grammatically either to Alexander, or to Darius, but as no man is said to make himself master of what was previously his own, the words connected prevent the false sense from presenting itself to the reader.

But it is not the pronouns only that are liable to be used ambiguously. There is in adjectives particularly, a great risk of ambiguity, when they are not adjoined to the substantives to which they belong. This hazard, it must be owned, is greater in our language than in most others, our adjectives having no declension whereby case, number, and gender, are distinguished. Their relation, therefore, for the most part, is not otherwise to be ascertained but by their place. The following sentence will serve for an example: "God heapeth favours on his servants ever li- "beral and faithful." Is it God or his servants that are liberal and faithful? If the former, say "God, ever liberal and faithful, heapeth favours "on his servants." If the latter, say either "God heapeth favours on his ever liberal and "faithful servants," or—— "his servants who are

"ever liberal and faithful." There is another frequent cause of ambiguity in the use of adjectives, which hath been as yet, in our language, very little attended to. Two or more are sometimes made to refer to the same substantive, when, in fact, they do not belong to the same thing, but to different things which being of the same kind, are expressed by the same generic name. I explain myself by an example: "Both "the ecclesiastic and secular powers concurred "in those measures." Here the two adjectives ecclesiastic and secular relate to the same substantive powers, but do not relate to the same individual things; for the powers denominated ecclesiastic are totally different from those denominated secular. Indeed, the reader's perfect knowlege of the difference, may prevent his attending to this ambiguity, or rather impropriety of speech. But this mode of expression ought to be avoided, because, if admitted in one instance where the meaning perhaps is clear to the generality of readers, a writer will be apt inadvertently to fall into it in other instances, where the meaning is not clear, nay, where most readers will be misled. This too common idiom may be avoided either by repeating the substantive, or by subjoining the substantive to the first adjective, and prefixing the article to the second as well as to the first. Say either, "Both the ecclesiastic powers "and the secular powers concurred in those

"measures;" or, which is perhaps preferable, "Both the ecclesiastic powers and the secular "concurred in those measures." The substantive being posterior to the first adjective, and anterior to the second, the second, though it refers, cannot, according to grammatical order, belong to it. The substantive is therefore understood as repeated; besides, the repetition of the article has the force to denote that this is not an additional epithet to the same subject, but belongs to a subject totally distinct, though coming under the same denomination. There is, indeed, one phrase liable to the aforesaid objection, which use hath so firmly established, that, I fear, it would savour of affectation to alter. The phrase I mean is, "The lords spiritual and tem-"poral in parliament assembled." Nevertheless, when it is not expected that we should express ourselves in the style of the law, and when we are not quoting either a decision of the house of peers, or an act of parliament, I imagine it would be better to say, "The spiritual lords and the "temporal."—On the contrary, wherever the two adjectives are expressive of qualities belonging to a subject, not only specifically, but individually the same, the other mode of speech is preferable, which makes them belong also to the same noun. Thus we say properly, "The high and mighty "states of Holland," because it is not some of the states that are denominated *high*, and others of

them *mighty*, but both epithets are given alike to all. It would therefore be equally faulty here to adopt such an arrangement as would make a reader conceive them to be different. In cases wherein the article is not used, the place of the substantive ought to show whether both adjectives belong to the same thing, or to different things having the same name. In the first case, the substantive ought either to precede both adjectives, or to follow both; in the second, it ought to follow the first adjective, and may be repeated after the second, or understood, as will best suit the harmony of the sentence, or the nature of the composition; for the second adjective cannot grammatically belong to the noun which follows the first, though that noun may properly suggest to the reader the word to be supplied. Thus I should say rightly, "It is the "opinion of all *good and wise men*, that a vicious "person cannot enjoy true happiness;" because I mean to signify, that this is the opinion of those to whom both qualities, goodness and wisdom, are justly attributed. But the following passage in our version of the sacred text, is not so proper: "Every scribe instructed into the king-"dom of heaven, is like an householder, who "bringeth out of his treasure *things new and old**." Both epithets cannot belong to the same things.

* Matthew xiii. 52.

Make but a small alteration in the order, and say *new things and old*, and you will add greatly both to the perspicuity and to the propriety of the expression. In cases similar to the example last quoted, if a preposition be necessary to the construction of the sentence, it ought to be repeated before the second adjective. Thus, "Death "is the common lot of all, of good men and of "bad." But when both adjectives express the qualities of an identical subject, it is better not to repeat the preposition. "The prince gave "encouragement to *all honest and industrious ar-* "*tificers* of neighbouring nations to come and "settle amongst his subjects." Here both qualities *honesty* and *industry* are required in every artificer encouraged by the prince. I shall observe lastly, on this article, that though the adjectives relate to different things, if no substantive be expressed, it is not necessary to repeat the preposition. The reason is, that in such cases the adjectives are used substantively, or, to speak more properly, are real substantives. Thus we may say either, "Death is the inevitable "fate of good and bad, rich and poor, wise and "foolish," or——"of good and of bad, of rich "and of poor."——When the definite article is prefixed to the first adjective, it ought to be repeated before the second, if the adjectives are expressive of qualities belonging to different subjects; but not if they refer to the same subject.

Thus we say rightly, "How immense the diffe-"rence between the pious and the profane." "I "address myself only to the intelligent and atten-"tive." In the former, the subjects referred to are manifestly different; in the latter, they coincide, as both qualities are required in every hearer. The following passage is by consequence justly censurable. The exceptionable phrases are distinguished by the character: "Wisdom and "folly, the virtuous and the vile, *the learned and* "*ignorant, the temperate and debauched*, all give "and return the jest*." For the same reason, and it is a sufficient reason, that he said "the "virtuous and the vile," he ought to have said "the learned and the ignorant, the temperate "and the debauched."

I proceed to give examples in some of the other parts of speech. The construction of substantive nouns is sometimes ambiguous. Take the following instance; "You shall seldom find a dull fellow "of good education, but (if he happen to have any "leisure upon his hands) will turn his head to one "of those two amusements for all fools of emi-"nence, *politics or poetry*†." The position of the words *politics or poetry* makes one at first imagine, that along with the term *eminence*, they are affected by the preposition *of*, and construed with *fools*. The repetition of the *to* after eminence would have to-

* Brown on the Characteristics, Ess. i. Sect. 5.

† Spectator, No. 43.

tally removed the ambiguity. A frequent cause of this fault in the construction of substantives, especially in verse, is when both what we call the nominative case and the accusative are put before the verb. As in nouns those cases are not distinguished either by inflection or by prepositions, so neither can they be distinguished in such instances by arrangement.

The rising tomb a lofty column bore *.

Did the tomb bear the column, or the column the tomb?

And thus the son the fervent sire address †.

This, though liable to the same objection, may be more easily rectified, at least in a considerable measure. As the possessive pronoun is supposed to refer to some preceding noun, which, for distinction's sake, I have here called the antecedent, though the term is not often used in so great latitude, it is always better to be construed with the accusative of the verb, and to refer to the nominative as its antecedent. The reason is, the nominative, to which it most naturally refers, whether actually preceding or not, is always conceived in the order of things to precede. If then it was the son who spoke, say,

And thus the son his fervent sire address.

* Pope's Odyssey, Book 12. † Ibid. Book 19.

If the father,

> And thus his son the fervent sire addrest.

In confirmation of this, let us consider the way in which we should express ourselves in plain prose, without any transposition of words. For the first, "Thus the son addressed his father;" for the second, "Thus the father addressed his "son;" are undoubtedly good: whereas, to say in lieu of the first, "Thus his son addressed the "father;" and in lieu of the second, "Thus his "father addressed the son," are not English. By the English idiom, therefore, the possessive pronoun is, in such instances, more properly joined to the regimen of the verb than to the nominative. If this practice were universal, as it is both natural and suitable to the genius of our tongue, it would always indicate the construction wherever the possessive pronoun could be properly introduced. For this reason I consider the two following lines as much clearer of the charge of ambiguity than the former quotation from the same work:

> Young Itylus, his parent's darling joy,
> Whom chance misled the mother to destroy *.

For though the words *whom* and *the mother* are both in the accusative, the one as the regimen of the active verb *misled*, the other as the regimen of the active verb *destroy*, yet the destroyer or agent

* Pope's Odyssey, Book 19.

is conceived in the natural order as preceding the destroyed or patient. If, therefore, the last line had been,

Whom chance misled his mother to destroy;

it would have more naturally imported, that the son destroyed his mother; as it stands, it more naturally imports, agreeably to the poet's design, that the mother destroyed her son; there being in this last case no access for the possessive pronoun. I acknowledge, however, that uniform usage cannot, (though both analogy and utility may) be pleaded in favour of the distinction now made. I therefore submit entirely to the candid and judicious, the propriety of observing it for the future.

The following is an example of ambiguity in using conjunctions: "At least my own private "letters leave room for a politician, well versed "in matters of this nature, to suspect *as much, as* "a penetrating friend of mine tells me*." The particle *as*, which in this sentence immediately precedes the word *a penetrating friend*, makes frequently a part of these compound conjunctions *as much as, as well as, as far as.*—It will therefore naturally appear at first to belong to the words *as much*, which immediately precede it. But as this is not really the case, it ought to have been otherwise situated; for it is not enough that it is

* Spect. No. 13.

separated by a comma, these small distinctions in the pointing being but too frequently overlooked. Alter the arrangement then, and the expression will be no longer ambiguous: "At "least my own private letters, as a penetrating "friend of mine tells me, leave room for a politi- "cian well versed in matters of this nature to "suspect as much." In the succeeding passage the same author gives us an example of ambiguity, in the application of an adverb and a conjunction: "I beseech you sir, to inform these "fellows, that they have *not* the spleen, *because* "they cannot talk without the help of a glass, "or convey their meaning to each other without "the interposition of clouds*." The ambiguity here lies in the two words *not* and *because*. What follows *because* appears, on the first hearing, to be the reason why the person here addressed, is desired to inform these fellows, that they are not splenetic; on the second, it appears to be the reason why people ought to conclude, that they are not; and on the third, the author seems only intending to signify, that this is not a sufficient reason to make any body conclude that they are. This error deserves our notice the more, that it is often to be found even in our best writers.

Sometimes a particular expression is so situated, that it may be construed with more or less of another particular expression which precedes it in

* Spect. No. 63.

the sentence, and may consequently exhibit different senses: "He has, by some strange magic, "arrived at the value of half a plumb, as the "citizens call *a hundred thousand pounds**." Is it *a plumb*, or *half a plumb*, which the citizens call "a hundred thousand pounds?" "I will spend "a hundred or *two* pounds, rather than be enslav-"ed †." This is another error of the same sort, but rather worse. *Hundred* cannot regularly be understood between the adjective *two* and its substantive *pounds*. Besides, the indefinite article *a* cannot properly express one side of the alternative, and supply the place of a numeral *adjective* opposed to *two*. The author's meaning would have been better expressed either of these ways: "I "will spend one or two hundred pounds," or, "I "will spend one hundred pounds or two, rather "than be enslaved." In the former case it is evident, that the words *hundred pounds* belong to both numeral adjectives; in the latter, that they are understood after the second. The reference and construction of the concluding words in the next quotation, is very indefinite; "My christian "and surname begin and end with *the same let-*"*ters* ‡." Doth his christian name begin with the same letter that his surname begins with, and end with the same letter that his surname ends

* Tatler, No. 40. † Swift to Sheridan.

‡ Spect. No. 505. O.

with? or, Doth his christian name end with the same letter with which it begins, and his surname also end with the same letter with which it begins? or, lastly, Are all these four letters, the first and the last of each name, the same letter *?

Sometimes a particular clause or expression is so situated, that it may be construed with different members of the sentence, and thus exhibit different meanings: "It has not a word," says Pope, "but what the author religiously thinks "*in it* †." One would at first imagine his meaning to be, that it had not a word which the author did not think to be in it. Alter a little the place of the two last words, and the ambiguity will be removed: "It has not a word *in it*, but "what the author religiously thinks." Of the same kind also is the subsequent quotation: "Mr "Dryden makes a very handsome observation on "Ovid's writing a letter from Dido to Æneas, *in* "*the following words* ‡." Whether are *the following words*, the words of Dido's letter, or of Dryden's observation? Before you read them, you will more readily suppose them to be the words of the letter; after reading them, you find they are the words of the observation. The order ought to have been, "Mr Dryden, in the follow-"ing words, makes a very handsome observa-

* An example of the first is Andrew Askew, of the second, Hezekiah Thrift, and of the third Norman Neilson.

† Guardian, No. 4. ‡ Spect. No. 62.

" tion on Ovid's writing a letter from Dido to " Æneas."

I shall conclude this section with an instance of that kind of ambiguity which the French call a *squinting construction**; that is, when a clause is so situated in a sentence, that one is at first at a loss to know whether it ought to be connected with the words which go before, or with those which come after. Take the following passage for an example: " As it is necessary to have the " head clear as well as the complexion, *to be per-* " *fect in this part of learning*, I rarely mingle with " the men, but frequent the tea-tables of the " ladies†." Whether, " To be perfect in this " part of learning, is it necessary to have the " head clear as well as the complexion;" or, " To " be perfect in this part of learning, does he " rarely mingle with the men, but frequent the " tea-tables of the ladies?" Which ever of these be the sense, the words ought to have been otherwise ranged.

Section III.

The unintelligible.

I have already considered two of the principal and most common offences against perspicuity;

* Construction louche. † Guardian, No. 10.

and come now to make some remarks on the third and last offence, mentioned in the enumeration formerly given. It was observed, that a speaker may not only express himself obscurely, and so convey his meaning imperfectly to the mind of the hearer, that he may not only express himself ambiguously, and so along with his own, convey a meaning entirely different; but even express himself unintelligibly, and so convey no meaning at all. One would, indeed, think it hardly possible, that a man of sense, who perfectly understands the language which he useth, should ever speak or write in such a manner as to be altogether unintelligible. Yet this is what frequently happens. The cause of this fault in any writer, I take to be always one or other of the three following; first, great confusion of thought, which is commonly accompanied with intricacy of expression; secondly, affectation of excellence in the diction; thirdly, a total want of meaning. I do not mention as one of the causes of this imputation, a penury of language; though this, doubtless, may contribute to produce it. In fact I never found one who had a justness of apprehension, and was free from affectation, at a loss to make himself understood in his native tongue, even though he had little command of language, and made but a bad choice of words.

PART I.—*From confusion of thought.*

The first cause of the unintelligible in composition, is confusion of thought. Language, as hath been already observed, is the medium through which the sentiments of the writer are perceived by the reader. And though the impurity or the grossness of the medium will render the image obscure or indistinct, yet no purity in the medium will suffice for exhibiting a distinct and unvarying image of a confused and unsteady object. There is a sort of half-formed thoughts, which we sometimes find writers impatient to give the world, before they themselves are fully possessed of them. Now if the writer himself perceive confusedly and imperfectly the sentiments he would communicate, it is a thousand to one, the reader will not perceive them at all. But how then, it may be asked, shall he be qualified for discovering the cause, and distinguishing in the writer between a confusion of thought, and a total want of meaning? I answer, that in examples of this kind, the cause will, sometimes, not always, be discovered, by means of an attentive and frequent perusal of the words and context. Some meaning, after long poring, will perhaps be traced; but in all such cases we may be said more properly to divine what the author would say, than to understand what he says; and therefore all such sentences deserve to be ranked among the *unintelli-*

gible. If a discovery of the sense be made, that it is made ought rather to be ascribed to the sagacity of the reader, than to the elocution of the writer. This species of the unintelligible (which, by the way, differs not in kind, but in degree, from the obscurity already considered, being no other than that bad quality in the extreme) I shall exemplify first in simple, and afterwards in complex sentences.

First in simple sentences: "I have observed," says Sir Richard Steele, who, though a man of sense and genius, was a great master in this style, "that the superiority among these," he is speaking of some coffee-house politicians, "proceeds "from an opinion of gallantry and fashion *." This sentence considered in itself, evidently conveys no meaning. First, it is not said, whose opinion, their own, or that of others; secondly, it is not said what opinion, or of what sort, favourable or unfavourable, true or false, but in general an opinion of gallantry and fashion, which contains no definite expression of any meaning. With the joint assistance of the context, reflection and conjecture, we shall perhaps conclude, that the author intended to say, "that the rank "among these politicians, was determined by "the opinion generally entertained of the rank "in point of gallantry and fashion that each of

* Spect. No. 49.

" them had attained." But no part of this is expressed. Another specimen: " And as to a well-
" taught mind, when you've said an haughty and
" proud man, you have spoke a narrow concep-
" tion, little spirit, and despicable carriage *." Here too it is possible to guess the intention of the author, but not to explain the import of the expression.

Take the two following examples of complex sentences from the same hand: " I must confess
" we live in an age wherein a few empty bluster-
" ers carry away the praise of speaking, while a
" crowd of fellows overstocked with knowledge
" are run down by them: I say, overstocked, be-
" cause they certainly are so, as to their service
" of mankind, if from their very store they raise
" to themselves ideas of respect and greatness of
" the occasion, and I know not what, to disable
" themselves from explaining their thoughts †." The other example is, " The serene aspect of
" these writers, joined with the great encourage-
" ment I observe is given to another, or, what is
" indeed to be suspected, in which he indulges
" himself, confirmed me in the notion I have of
" the prevalence of ambition this way ‡." But, leaving this, which is indeed the dullest species of the unintelligible, I proceed to the second

* Guardian, No. 20. † Spect. No. 444.
‡ Guardian, No. 1.

class, that which arises from an affectation of excellence.

PART II.—*From affectation of excellence.*

In this there is always something figurative; but the figures are remote, and things heterogeneous are combined. I shall exemplify this sort also, first in a few more simple sentences, and then in such as are more complex. Of the former, take the following instances: "This temper of soul," says the Guardian, speaking of meekness and humility, "keeps our understanding tight about "us *." Whether the author had any meaning in this expression, or what it was, I shall not take upon me to determine; but hardly could any thing more incongruous in the way of metaphor, have been imagined. The understanding is made a girdle to our other mental faculties, for the fastening of which girdle, meekness and humility serve for a buckle. "A man is not qualified for "a butt, who has not a good deal of wit and "vivacity, *even in the ridiculous side of his cha-* "*racter* †." It is only the additional clause in the end that is here exceptionable. What a strange jumble! A man's wit and vivacity placed in the side of his character. Sometimes in a sentence

* Guardian, No 1. † Spect. No. 47.

sufficiently perspicuous, we shall find an unintelligible clause inserted, which, as it adds not to the sense, serves only to interrupt the reader, and darken the sentiment. Of this the following passage will serve for an example: "I seldom "see a noble building, or any great piece of mag- "nificence and pomp, but I think, how little is "all this to satisfy the ambition, *or to fill the idea*, "of an immortal soul *." Pray, what addition does the phrase *to fill the idea* make to the sense; or what is the meaning of it? I shall subjoin, for the sake of variety, one poetical example from Dryden, who, speaking of the universal deluge, says,

> Yet when that flood in its own depths was drown'd,
> It left behind it false and slippery ground †.

The first of these lines appears to me marvellously nonsensical. It informs us of a prodigy never heard of or conceived before, a drowned flood; nay, which is still more extraordinary, a flood that was so excessively deep, that after leaving nothing else to drown, it turned *felo-de-se* and drowned itself. And, doubtless, if a flood can be in danger of drowning in itself, the deeper it is, the danger must be the greater. So far at least the author talks consequentially. His meaning

* Pope's Thoughts on various Subjects.

† Panegyric on the coronation of King Charles II.

expressed in plain language (for the line itself hath no meaning) was probably no more than this: "When the waters of the deluge had sub-"sided."

I proceed to give examples of a still higher order, in sentences more complicated. These I shall produce from an author, who, though far from being deficient in acuteness, invention, or vivacity, is perhaps, in this species of composition, the most eminent of all that have written in the English language: "If the savour of things "lies cross to honesty, if the fancy be florid, and "the appetite high towards the subaltern beau-"ties and lower order of wordly symmetries and "proportions, the conduct will infallibly turn "this latter way*." This is that figure of speech which the French critics call *galimatias*, and the English comprehend under the general name *bombast*, and which may not improperly be defined *the sublime of nonsense*. You have lofty images and high sounding words, but are always at a loss to find the sense. The meaning, where there is a meaning, cannot be said to be communicated and adorned by the words, but is rather buried under them. Of the same kind are the two following quotations from the same author: "Men "must acquire a very peculiar and strong habit "of turning their eye inwards, in order to ex-

* Characteristics, Vol. III. Misc. ii. Chap. 2.

" plore the interior regions and recesses of the " mind, the hollow caverns of deep thought, the " private seats of fancy, and the wastes and wil- " dernesses, as well as the more fruitful and cul- " tivated tracts of this obscure climate *." A most wonderful way of telling us, that it is difficult to trace the operations of the mind. This may serve to give some notion of the figure which the French Phebus, no offence to the Grecian who is of a very different family, is capable of making in an English dress. His lordship proceeds in his own inimitable manner, or rather in what follows hath outdone himself: " But what can one do? or how dispense with " these darker disquisitions, and moon-light voy- " ages, when we have to deal with a sort of moon- " blind wits, who, though very acute and able in " their kind, may be said to renounce day-light, " and extinguish in a manner the bright visible " outward world, by allowing us to know no- " thing beside what we can prove by strict and " formal demonstration †." It must be owned, the condition of those wits is truly deplorable, for though very acute and able in their kind, yet being moon-blind, they cannot see by night, and having renounced day-light, they will not see by day: so that, for any use they have of their eyes,

* Characteristics, Vol. III. Misc. iv. Chap. 2.

† Ibid.

they are no better than stone-blind. It is astonishing too, that the reason for rendering a moonlight voyage indispensable, is that we have moon-blind persons only for our company, the very reason which to an ordinary understanding would seem to render such a voyage improper. When one narrowly examines a piece of writing of this stamp, one finds one's self precisely in the situation of the fox in the fable, turning over, and considering the tragedian's mask *, and can hardly refrain from exclaiming in the same words:

How vast a head is here without a brain! †.

Part III.—*From want of meaning.*

I come now to the last class of the unintelligible, which proceeds from a real want of meaning in the writer. Instances of this sort are even in the works of good authors much more numerous than is commonly imagined. But how shall this defect be discovered? There are indeed cases, in which it is hardly discoverable; there are cases,

* *Persona tragica* is commonly rendered so; but it was very different from what is called a mask with us. It was a case which covered the whole head, and had a face painted on it suitable to the character to be represented by it.

† O quanta species, inquit, est cerebrum non habet! *Phædrus.*

on the contrary, in which it may be easily discovered. There is one remarkable difference between this class of the unintelligible, and that which was first taken notice of, proceeding from confusion of thought, accompanied with intricacy of expression. When this is the cause of the difficulty, the reader will not fail, if he be attentive, to hesitate at certain intervals, and to retrace his progress, finding himself bewildered in the terms, and at a loss for the meaning. Then he will try to construe the sentence, and to ascertain the significations of the words. By these means, and by the help of the context, he will possibly come at last at what the author would have said. Whereas, in that species of the unintelligible which proceeds from a vacuity of thought, the reverse commonly happens. The sentence is generally simple in its structure, and the construction easy. When this is the case, provided words glaringly unsuitable are not combined, the reader proceeds without hesitation or doubt. He never suspects that he does not understand a sentence, the terms of which are familiar to him, and of which he perceives distinctly the grammatical order. But if he be by any means induced to think more closely on the subject, and to peruse the words a second time more attentively; it is probable that he will then begin to suspect them, and will at length discover, that they contain nothing, but either an identical proposition which conveys no knowledge,

or a proposition of that kind, of which one cannot so much as affirm, that it is either true or false. And this is justly allowed to be the best criterion of nonsense*. It is, indeed, more difficult to distinguish sentences of this kind from those of the second class of the unintelligible already discussed, in which the darkness is chiefly imputable to an affectation of excellence. But in these matters it is not of importance to fix the boundaries with precision. Sometimes pompous metaphors, and sonorous phrases, are injudiciously employed to add a dignity to the most trivial conceptions; sometimes they are made to serve as a vehicle for nonsense. And whether some of the above citations fall under the one denomination, or the other, would scarcely be worth while to inquire. It hath been observed, that in madmen there is as great a variety of character, as in those who enjoy the use of their reason. In like manner, it may be said of nonsense, that, in writing it,

* Of all that is written in this style, we may justly say in the words of Lord Verulam (De Aug. Sci. L. vi. C. 2.) applying to a particular purpose the words of Horace,

> ———Tantum series juncturaque pollet,
> Tantum de medio sumptis accedit honoris;

ut speciem artis, nescio cujus, præclaræ sæpenumoro reportent ea, quæ si solvantur, segregentur, et denudentur, ad nihilum fere recasura forent. ——As to the causes of the deception there is in this manner of writing, I shall attempt the investigation of them in the following chapter.

there is as great scope for variety of style, as there is in writing sense. I shall therefore not attempt to give specimens of all the characters of style which this kind of composition admits. The task would be endless. Let it suffice to specify some of the principal.

1. *The puerile.*

The first I shall mention is the *puerile*, which is always produced when an author runs on in a specious verbosity, amusing his reader with synonymous terms and identical propositions, well-turned periods, and high-sounding words; but, at the same time, using those words so indefinitely, that the latter can either affix no meaning to them at all, or may almost affix any meaning to them he pleases. "If 'tis asked," says a late writer, "Whence arises this harmony or beauty "of language? what are the rules for obtaining "it? The answer is obvious, Whatever renders "a period sweet and pleasant, makes it also "graceful; a good ear is the gift of Nature, it "may be much improved, but not acquired by "art; whoever is possessed of it, will scarcely "need dry critical precepts to enable him to "judge of a true rythmus, and melody of com-"position: just numbers, accurate proportions, "a musical symphony, magnificent figures, and "that *decorum*, which is the result of all these,

" are *unison* to the human mind; we are so fram-
" ed by Nature, that their charm is irresistible.
" Hence all ages and nations have been smit
" with the love of the muses *." Who can now be at a loss to know whence the harmony and beauty of language arises, or what the rules for obtaining it, are? Through the whole paragraph, the author proceeds in the same careless and desultory manner, not much unlike that of the critical essay upon the faculties of the mind; affording at times some glimmerings of sense, and perpetually ringing the changes on a few favourite words and phrases. A poetical example of the same signature, in which there is not even a glimpse of meaning, we have in the following lines of Dryden:

From harmony, from heavenly harmony
This universal frame began;
From harmony to harmony
Thro' all the compass of the notes it ran,
The diapason closing full in man †.

In general it may be said, that in writings of this stamp, we must accept of sound instead of sense, being assured at least, that if we meet with little that can inform the judgment, we shall find nothing that will offend the ear.

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* Geddes on the composition of the Ancients, Sect. 1.

† Song for St Cecilia's day, 1687.

2. *The learned.*

Another sort I shall here specify, is the learned nonsense. I know not a more fruitful source of this species, than scholastical theology. The more incomprehensible the subject is, the greater scope has the declaimer to talk plausibly without any meaning. A specimen of this I shall give from an author, who should have escaped this animadversion, had he not introduced from the pulpit a jargon which (if we can say without impropriety, that it was fit for any thing) was surely fitter for the cloister: For what cannot in the least contribute to the instruction of a christian society, may afford excellent matter of contemplative amazement to dronish monks. "Although we read of several properties attributed to God in scripture, as wisdom, goodness, justice, &c. we must not apprehend them to be several powers, habits, or qualities, as they are in us; for as they are in God, they are neither distinguished from one another, nor from his nature or essence in whom they are said to be. In whom, I say, they are said to be: for, to speak properly, they are not in him, but are his very essence or nature itself; which, acting severally upon several objects, seems to us to act from several properties or perfections in him; whereas, all the difference is only in our

" different apprehensions of the same thing. God " in himself is a most simple and pure act, and " therefore cannot have any thing in him, but " what is that most simple and pure act itself; " which, seeing it bringeth upon every creature " what it deserves, we conceive of it as of several " divine perfections in the same almighty Being. " Whereas God, whose understanding is infinite " as himself, doth not apprehend himself under " the distinct notions of wisdom, or goodness, or " justice, or the like, but only as Jehovah *." How edifying must it have been to the hearers to be made acquainted with these deep discoveries of the men of science; divine attributes, which are no attributes, which are totally distinct and perfectly the same; which are justly ascribed to God, being ascribed to him in scripture, but do not belong to him; which are something and nothing, which are the figments of human imagination, mere chimeras, which are God himself, which are the actors of all things; and which, to sum up all, are themselves a simple act! " *Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words with-* " *out knowledge* †?" Can the tendency of such teaching be any other than to perplex and to confound, and even to throw the hearers into universal doubt and scepticism? To such a style of explication these lines of our British bard,

* Beveridge's Sermons. † Job xxxviii. 2.

addressed to the patroness of sophistry as well as dulness, are admirably adapted:

> Explain upon a thing, till all men doubt it;
> And write about it, goddess, and about it *.

Of the same kind of school-metaphysics are these lines of Cowley:

> Nothing is there *to come*, and nothing *past*,
> But an eternal *now* does always *last* †.

What an insatiable appetite has this bastard-philosophy for absurdity and contradiction! A *now* that lasts; that is, an instant which continues during successive instants; an eternal now, an instant that is no instant, and an eternity that is no eternity. I have heard of a preacher, who, desirous to appear very profound, and to make observations on the commonest subjects, which had never occurred to any body before, remarked, as an instance of the goodness of providence, that the moments of time come successively, and not simultaneously or together, which last method of coming would, he said, occasion infinite confusion in the world. Many of his audience concluded his remark to be no better than a bull: and yet, it is fairly defensible on the principles of the schoolmen; if that can be called principles which consists merely in words. According to them, what Pope says hyperbolically of the transient duration and narrow range of man, is a

* Dunciad. † Davideis, Book 4.

literal description of the eternity and immensity of God:

> His time a moment, and a point his space *.

I remember to have seen it somewhere remarked, that mankind being necessarily incapable of making a present of any thing to God, have conceived, as a succedaneous expedient, the notion of destroying what should be offered to him, or at least of rendering it unfit for any other purpose. Something similar appears to have taken place in regard to the explanations of the divine nature and attributes, attempted by some theorists. On a subject so transcendent, if it be impossible to be sublime, it is easy to be unintelligible. And that the theme is naturally incomprehensible, they seem to have considered as a full apology for them in being perfectly absurd. In the former case, what people could not in strictness bestow upon their Maker, they could easily render unfit for the use of men; and in the latter, if one cannot grasp what is above the reach of reason, one can without difficulty say a thousand things which are contrary to reason.

But though scholastic theology be the principal, it is not the only subject of learned nonsense. In other branches of pneumatology we often meet with rhapsodies of the same kind. I shall take an example from a late right honourable writer, who,

* Essay on Man, Ep. i.

though he gives no quarter to the rants of others, sometimes falls into the ranting strain himself: "Pleasures are the objects of self-love; happi-
"ness that of reason. Reason is so far from de-
"priving us of the first, that happiness consists
"in a series of them: and as this can be neither
"attained nor enjoyed securely out of society,
"a due use of our reason makes social and self-
"love coincide, or even become in effect the same.
"The condition wherein we are born and bred,
"the very condition so much complained of, pre-
"pares us for this coincidence, the foundation of
"all human happiness: and our whole nature,
"appetite, passion, and reason, concur to pro-
"mote it. As our parents loved themselves
"in us, so we love ourselves in our children,
"and in those to whom we are most nearly
"related by blood. Thus far instinct improves
"self-love. Reason improves it further. We love
"ourselves in our neighbours, and in our friends
"too, with Tully's leave; for if friendship is form-
"ed by a kind of sympathy, it is cultivated by
"good offices. Reason proceeds. We love our-
"selves in loving the political body whose mem-
"bers we are; and we love ourselves, when we
"extend our benevolence to all mankind. These
"are the genuine effects of reason[*]." I would not be understood to signify, that there is no

[*] Bolingb. Phi. Fr. 15

meaning in any clause of this quotation, but that the greater part of it is unmeaning; and that the whole, instead of exhibiting a connected train of thought, agreeably to the author's intention, presents us only with a few trifling or insignificant phrases speciously strung together. The very first sentence is justly exceptionable in this respect. Had he said, "Pleasure is the object of "appetite, happiness that of self-love," there had been some sense in it; as it stands, I suspect there is none. Pope, the great admirer and versifier of this philosophy, hath succeeded much better in contra-distinguishing the provinces of reason and passion, where he says,

Reason the card, but passion is the gale *.

This always the mover, that the guide. As the card serves equally to point to us the course that we must steer, whatever be the situation of the port we are bound for, east or west, south or north; so reason serves equally to indicate the means that we must employ for the attainment of any end, whatever that end be (right or wrong, profitable or pernicious) which passion impels us to pursue †. All that follows of the passage quoted, abounds with the like loose and indefinite declamation. If the author had any meaning, a point very questionable, he hath been very

* Essay on Man, Ep. ii.

† For the further elucidation of this point, see the analysis of persuasion given in Book I. Chap. VII. Sect. iv.

unhappy, and very unphilosophical in expressing it. What are we to make of the coincidence or sameness of self-love and social affection produced by reason? What of parents loving themselves in their children? &c. &c.—Any thing you please, or nothing. It is a saying of Hobbes, which this author hath quoted with deserved commendation, that "words are the coun-" ters of wise men, but the money of fools." The thought is ingenious and happily expressed. I shall only remark upon it, that this noble writer may be produced as one of many witnesses, to prove, that it is not peculiar to fools to fall into this error. He is a wise man indeed who never mistakes these counters for legal coin. So much for the learned nonsense. And doubtless, if nonsense ever deserves to be exposed, it is when she has the arrogance to assume the garb of wisdom.

3. *The profound.*

I proceed to another species, which I shall denominate *the profound*, and which is most commonly to be met with in political writings. Nowhere else do we find the merest nothings set off with an air of solemnity, as the result of very deep thought and sage reflection. Of this kind, however, I shall produce a specimen, which, in confirmation of a remark made in the preceding

paragraph, shall be taken from a justly celebrated tract, of a justly celebrated pen: "'Tis "agreed," says Swift, "that in all governments "there is an absolute and unlimited power, which "naturally and originally seems to be placed in "the whole body, wherever the executive part of "it lies. This holds in the body natural; for "wherever we place the beginning of motion, "whether from the head, or the heart, or the ani- "mal spirits in general, the body moves and acts "by a consent of all its parts *." The first sentence of this passage contains one of the most hackneyed maxims of the writers on politics; a maxim, however, of which it will be more difficult than is commonly imagined, to discover, I say, not the justness, but the sense. The illustration from the natural body, contained in the second sentence, is indeed more glaringly nonsensical. What it is that constitutes this consent of all the parts of the body which must be obtained previously to every motion, is, I will take upon me to affirm, utterly inconceivable. Yet the whole of the paragraph from which this quotation is taken, hath such a speciousness in it, that it is a hundred to one, even a judicious reader will not, on the first perusal, be sensible of the defect.

* Disc. of the Contests and Dissensions in Athens and Rome, first sentence.

4. *The marvellous.*

The last species of nonsense to be exemplified I shall denominate *the marvellous.* It is the characteristic of this kind, that it astonishes and even confounds by the boldness of the affirmations, which always appear flatly to contradict the plainest dictates of common sense, and thus to involve a manifest absurdity. I know no sort of authors that so frequently abounds in this manner, as some artists, who have attempted to philosophise on the principles of their art. I shall give an example from the English translation of a French book*, as there is no example which I can remember at present in any book written originally in our own language: "Nature," says this writer, "in herself is unseemly, and he who co-"pies her servilely, and without artifice, will al-"ways produce something poor, and of a mean "taste. What is called load in colours and lights, "can only proceed from a profound knowledge "in the values of colours, and from an admir-"able industry, which makes the painted objects "appear more true, if I may say so, than the real "ones. In this sense it may be asserted, that in "Rubens' pieces, Art is above Nature, and Na-"ture only a copy of that great master's works."

* De Piles' Principles of Painting.

What a strange subversion, or inversion, if you will, of all the most obvious, and hitherto undisputed truths. Not satisfied with affirming the unseemliness of every production of Nature, whom this philosopher hath discovered to be an arrant bungler, and the immense superiorty of human Art, whose humble scholer dame Nature might be proud to be accounted, he riseth to asseverations, which shock all our notions, and utterly defy the powers of apprehension. Painting is found to be the original; or rather Rubens' pictures are the original, and Nature is the copy: and indeed very consequentially, the former is represented as the standard by which the beauty and perfections of the latter are to be estimated. Nor do the qualifying phrases, *if I may say so*, and *in this sense it may be asserted*, make here the smallest odds. For as this sublime critic has nowhere hinted what sense it is which he denominates *this sense*, so I believe no reader will be able to conjecture, what the author *might have said*, and not absurdly said to the same effect. The misfortune is, that when the expression is stript of the *absurd meaning* *, there remains nothing but balderdash †, an unmeaning jumble of words which at first seem to announce some great disco-

* For the propriety and import of this expression, see Ch. VII. Sec II.

† The latter part of the sentence was thus expressed in the first edition, "a jumble of words without meaning." To this phraseology exception was taken, which, though not entirely just, appears to have arisen from

very *. Specimens of the same kind are sometimes also to be met with in the poets. Witness the famous protestation of an heroic lover in one of Dryden's plays:

My wound is great, because it is so small.

The nonsense of which was properly exposed by an extemporary verse of the Duke of Buckingham, who, on hearing this line, exclaimed in the house,

'Tis would be greater, were it none at all.

Hyperbolé carried to extravagance, is much of a piece, and never fails to excite disgust, if not laughter, instead of admiration. Of this the famous laureat just now quoted, though indeed a

some obscurity, perhaps ambiguity in the expression. This, I hope, is removed by the alteration now made.

* Since writing the above observations, I have seen De Piles' original performance, and find that his translator hath, in this place at least, done him no injustice. The whole passage in the French is as follows: "La "Nature est ingrate d'elle-même, et qui s'attacheroit à la copier simple- "ment comme elle est, et sans artifice, feroit toujours quelque chose de "pauvre et d'un très petit goût. Ce que vous nommez exagerations dans "les couleurs, et dans les lumieres, est une admirable industrie que fait "paroitre les objets peints plus véritables, s'il faut ainsi dire, que les véri- "tables mêmes. C'est ainsi que les tableaux de Rubens sont plus beaux "que la Nature, laquelle semble n'être que la copie des ouvrages de ce "grand-homme." Recueil de divers ouvrages sur la peinture et le coloris. Par M. de Piles. Paris, 1755. p. 225. This is rather worse than the English. The qualifying phrase in the last sentence, we find, is the translator's, who seems out of sheer modesty to have brought it to cover nudities. His intention was good; but this is such a rag as cannot answer.

very considerable genius, affords, among many other striking instances, that which follows:

> That star, that at your birth shone out so bright;
> It stain'd the duller sun's meridian light *.

Such vile fustian ought to be carefully avoided by every writer.

Thus I have illustrated, as far as example can illustrate, some of the principal varieties to be remarked in unmeaning sentences or nonsense; the puerile, the learned, the profound, and the marvellous; together with those other classes of the unintelligible, arising either from confusion of thought, accompanied with intricacy of expression, or from an excessive aim at excellence in the style and manner.

So much for the explication of the first rhetorical quality of style, perspicuity, with the three ways of expressing one's self by which it may be injured; the obscure, the double meaning, and the unintelligible.

* Dryden on the Restoration.

CHAP. VII.

What is the Cause that Nonsense so often escapes being detected, both by the Writer and by the Reader?

SECTION. I.

The nature and power of signs, both in speaking and in thinking.

BEFORE quitting the subject of perspicuity, it will not be amiss to inquire into the cause of this strange phenomenon; that even a man of discernment should write without meaning, and not be sensible that he hath no meaning; and that judicious people should read what hath been written in this way, and not discover the defect. Both are surprising, but the first much more than the last. A certain remissness will at times seize the most attentive reader; whereas an author of discernment is supposed to have carefully digested all that he writes. It is reported of Lopez de Vega, a famous Spanish poet, that the Bishop of Belfer, being in Spain, asked him to explain one of his sonnets, which he said he had often read, but never understood. Lopez took up the sonnet, and after reading it several times, frankly acknowledged that he did not understand it himself; a discovery which the poet probably never made before.

But though the general fact hath been frequently observed, I do not find that any attempt hath been yet made to account for it. Berkeley, indeed, in his Principles of Human Knowledge, hath suggested a theory concerning language, though not with this view, which, if well-founded, will go far to remove the principal difficulty: "It is a received opinion," says that author, "that "language has no other end, but the communi- "cating our ideas, and that every significant name "stands for an idea. This being so, and it be- "ing withal certain, that names, which yet are "not thought altogether insignificant, do not "always mark out particular conceivable ideas, "it is straightway concluded, that they stand "for abstract notions. That there are many "names in use amongst speculative men, which "do not always suggest to others determinate par- "ticular ideas, is what nobody will deny. And "a little attention will discover, that it is not ne- "cessary (even in the strictest reasonings) signifi- "cant names which stand for ideas, should, every "time they are used, excite in the understanding, "the ideas they are made to stand for. In read- "ing and discoursing, names being for the most "part used, as letters are in algebra, in which, "though a particular quantity be marked by each "letter, yet to proceed right, it is not requisite, "that in every step each letter suggest to your "thoughts, that particular quantity it was ap-

"pointed to stand for *." The same principles have been adopted by the author of a Treatise of Human Nature, who, speaking of abstract ideas, has the following words: "I believe every one, "who examines the situation of his mind in rea- "soning, will agree with me, that we do not an- "nex distinct and complete ideas to every term "we make use of, and that in talking of *govern- "ment, church, negociation, conquest*, we seldom "spread out in our minds all the simple ideas of "which these complex ones are composed. 'Tis, "however, observable, that notwithstanding this "imperfection, we may avoid talking nonsense "on these subjects, and may perceive any repug- "nance among the ideas, as well as if we had a "full comprehension of them. Thus if, instead "of saying that *in war the weaker have always "recourse to negociation*, we should say, that *they "have always recourse to conquest*; the custom "which we have acquired of attributing certain "relations to ideas, still follows the words, and "makes us immediately perceive the absurdity "of that proposition †." Some excellent obser- vations to the same purpose have also been made by the elegant Inquirer into the origin of our ideas of the sublime and beautiful ‡.

Now that the notions on this subject maintain- ed by these ingenious writers, however strange

* Introd. Sect. 19. † Vol. I. Book i. Part 2. Sect. 7.
‡ Part V.

they may appear on a superficial view, are well-founded, is at least presumable from this consideration; that if, agreeably to the common hypothesis, we could understand nothing that is said, but by actually comparing in our minds all the ideas signified, it would be impossible that nonsense should ever escape undiscovered, at least that we should so far impose upon ourselves, as to think we understand what in reality is not to be understood. We should in that case find ourselves in the same situation, when an unmeaning sentence is introduced into a discourse, wherein we find ourselves when a sentence is quoted in a language of which we are entirely ignorant: we are never in the smallest danger of imagining that we apprehend the meaning of the quotation.

But though a very curious fact hath been taken notice of by those expert metaphysicians, and such a fact as will perhaps account for the deception we are now considering; yet the fact itself, in my apprehension, hath not been sufficiently accounted for. That mere sounds, which are used only as signs, and have no natural connection with the things whereof they are signs, should convey knowledge to the mind, even when they excite no idea of the things signified, must appear at first extremely mysterious. It is, therefore, worth while to consider the matter more closely; and in order to this, it will be proper to

attend a little to the three following connexions: first, that which subsisteth among things; secondly, that which subsisteth between words and things; thirdly, that which subsisteth among words, or the different terms used in the same language.

As to the first of these connexions; namely, that which subsisteth among things; it is evident that this is original and natural. There is a variety of relations to be found in things, by which they are connected. Such are, among several others, resemblance, identity*, equality, contrariety, cause and effect, concomitancy, vicinity in time or place. These we become acquainted with by experience: and they prove, by means of association, the source of various combinations of ideas, and abstractions, as they are commonly denominated. Hence mixt modes and distinctions into genera and species; of the origin of which I have had occasion to speak already†.

As to the second connexion, or that which subsisteth between words and things, it is obvious,

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* It may be thought improper to mention *identity* as a relation by which *different* things are connected; but it must be observed, that I only mean so far *different*, as to constitute distinct objects to the mind. Thus the consideration of the same person, when a child and when a man, is the consideration of different objects, between which there subsists the relation of identity.

† Book I. Chap. V. Sect. II. Part 2. On the formation of experience.

as hath been hinted formerly, that this is not a natural and necessary, but an artificial and arbitrary connexion. Nevertheless, though this connexion hath not its foundation in the nature of things, but in the conventions of men, its effect upon the mind is much the same. For, having often had occasion to observe particular words used as signs of particular things, we hence contract a habit of associating the sign with the thing signified, insomuch that either being presented to the mind, frequently introduces, or occasions, the apprehension of the other. Custom, in this instance, operates precisely in the same manner as in the formation of experience formerly explained. Thus, certain sounds, and the ideas of things not naturally related to them, come to be as strongly linked in our conceptions, as the ideas of things naturally related to one another.

As to the third connexion, or that which subsisteth among words, I would not be understood to mean any connexion among the words considered as sounds, such as that which results from resemblance in pronunciation, equality in the number of syllables, sameness of measure or cadence; I mean solely that connexion of relation which comes gradually to subsist among the different words of a language, in the minds of those who speak it, and which is merely consequent on this, that those words are employed as signs of connected or related things. It is an axiom in geo-

metry, that things equal to the same thing, are equal to one another. It may, in like manner, be admitted as an axiom in psychology, that ideas associated by the same idea will associate with one another. Hence it will happen, that if from experiencing the connexion of two things, there results, as infallibly there will result, an association between the ideas or notions annexed to them, as each idea will moreover be associated by its signs, there will likewise be an association between the ideas of the signs. Hence the sounds considered as signs, will be conceived to have a connexion analogous to that which subsisteth among the things signified; I say, the sounds considered as signs: for this way of considering them constantly attends us in speaking, writing, hearing, and reading. When we purposely abstract from it, and regard them merely as sounds, we are instantly sensible, that they are quite unconnected, and have no other relation than what ariseth from similitude of tone or accent. But to consider them in this manner commonly results from previous design, and requires a kind of effort which is not exerted in the ordinary use of speech. In ordinary use they are regarded solely as signs, or rather they are confounded with the things they signify; the consequence of which is, that, in the manner just now explained, we come insensibly to conceive a connexion among them, of a very dif-

ferent sort from that of which sounds are naturally susceptible.

Now this conception, habit, or tendency of the mind, call it which you please, is considerably strengthened both by the frequent use of language, and by the structure of it. It is strengthened by the frequent use of language. Language is the sole channel through which we communicate our knowledge and discoveries to others, and through which the knowledge and discoveries of others are communicated to us. By reiterated recourse to this medium, it necessarily happens, that when things are related to each other, the words signifying those things are more commonly brought together in discourse. Hence the words and names themselves, by customary vicinity, contract in the fancy a relation additional to that which they derive purely from being the symbols of related things. Further, this tendency is strengthened by the structure of language. All languages whatever, even the most barbarous, as far as hath yet appeared, are of a regular and analogical make. The consequence is, that similar relations in things will be expressed similarly; that is, by similar inflections, derivations, compositions, arrangement of words, or juxtaposition of particles, according to the genius or grammatical form of the particular tongue. Now, as by the habitual use of a language (even though it were quite irregular) the signs would insensibly become

connected in the imagination, wherever the things signified are connected in nature; so, by the regular structure of a language, this connexion among the signs is conceived as analogous to that which subsisteth among their archetypes. From these principles we may be enabled both to understand the meaning, and to perceive the justness of what is affirmed in the end of the preceding quotation: "The custom which we have "acquired of attributing certain relations to ideas, "still follows the words, and makes us *immediate-* "*ly* perceive the absurdity of that proposition." *Immediately*, that is, even before we have leisure to give that attention to the signs which is necessary in order to form a just conception of the things signified. In confirmation of this doctrine it may be observed, that we really think by signs as well as speak by them.

I have hitherto, in conformity to what is now become a general and inveterate custom, and in order to avoid tiresome circumlocutions, used the terms *sign* and *idea* as exactly correlative. This, I am sensible, is not done with strict propriety. All words are signs, but that the signification cannot always be represented by an idea, will, I apprehend, be abundantly evident from the observations following. All the truths which constitute science, which give exercise to reason, and are discovered by philosophy, are general; all our ideas, in the strictest sense of the word,

are particular. All the particular truths about which we are conversant, are properly historical, and compose the furniture of memory. Nor do I include under the term *historical*, the truths which belong to natural history; for even these too are general. Now, beyond particular truths or individual facts, first perceived and then remembered, we should never be able to proceed one single step in thinking, any more than in conversing, without the use of signs.

When it is affirmed that *the whole is equal to all its parts*, there cannot be an affirmation which is more perfectly intelligible, or which commands a fuller assent. If, in order to comprehend this, I recur to ideas, all that I can do, is to form a notion of some individual whole, divided into a certain number of parts, of which it is constituted, suppose of the year divided into the four seasons. Now all that I can be said to discern here, is the relation of equality between this particular whole and its component parts. If I recur to another example, I only perceive another particular truth. The same holds of a third and of a fourth. But so far am I, after the perception of ten thousand particular similar instances, from the discovery of the universal truth, that if the mind had not the power of considering things as signs, or particular ideas as representing an infinity of others, resembling in one circumstance, though totally dissimilar in every other, I could

not so much as conceive the meaning of an universal truth. Hence it is that *some ideas*, to adopt the expression of the author above quoted, *are particular in their nature, but general in their representation.*

There is, however, it must be acknowledged, a difficulty in explaining this power the mind hath, of considering ideas, not in their private, but, as it were, in their representative capacity; which, on that author's system, who divides all the objects of thought into impressions and ideas, will be found altogether insurmountable. It was to avoid this difficulty that philosophers at first recurred, as is sometimes the case, to a still greater, or rather to a downright absurdity, the doctrine of abstract ideas. I mean only that doctrine as it hath been frequently explained; for if any one is pleased to call that faculty by which a particular idea is regarded as representing a whole order, by the name *abstraction*, I have no objection to the term: nay more, I think it sufficiently expressive of the sense:—whilst certain qualities of the individual remain unnoticed, and are therefore abstracted from, those qualities only which it hath in common with the order engross the mind's attention. But this is not what those writers seem to mean, who philosophise upon abstract ideas, as is evident from their own explications.

The patrons of this theory maintain, or at least express themselves, as if they maintained, that the mind is endowed with a power of forming ideas, or images, within itself, that are possessed not only of incongruous, but of inconsistent qualities, of a triangle, for example, that is of all possible dimensions and proportions, both in sides and angles, at once right-angled, acute-angled, and obtuse-angled, equilateral, equicrural, and scalenum. One would have thought, that the bare mention of this hypothesis would have been equivalent to a confutation of it, since it really confutes itself.

Yet in this manner one no less respectable in the philosophic world than Mr Locke, has, on some occasions expressed himself*. I consider the difference, however, on this article, between him and the two authors above mentioned, as more apparent than real, or (which amounts to the same thing) more in words than in sentiments. It is indeed scarcely possible that men of discernment, should think differently on a subject so perfectly subjected to every one's own consciousness and experience. What has betrayed the former into such unguarded and improper expressions, is plainly an undue, and till then, unprecedented use of the word *idea*, which he has employed (for the sake, I suppose of simplify-

* Essay on Human Understanding, B. II. C. xi. Sect. 10, 11. B. IV. C. vii. Sect. 9.

ing his system) to signify not only, as formerly, the traces of things retained in the memory, and the images formed by the fancy, but even the perceptions of the senses on the one hand, and the conceptions of the intellect on the other, "it "being that term which," in his opinion, "serves "best to stand for whatsoever is the object of "the understanding, when a man thinks*." Accordingly he nowhere, that I remember, defines it with some logicians, "a pattern or copy "of a thing in the mind." Nevertheless he has not always, in speaking on the subject, attended to the different acceptation he had in the beginning affixed to the word; but, misled by the common definition (which regards a more limited object), and applying it to the term in that more extensive import which he had himself given it, has fallen into those inconsistencies in language, which have been before observed. Thus this great man has, in his own example, as it were, demonstrated how difficult it is even for the wisest to guard uniformly against the inconveniencies arising from the ambiguity of words.

But that what I have now advanced is not spoken rashly, and that there was no material differerence between his opinion and theirs on this article, is, I think, manifest from the following passage: "To return to general words, it

* Essay on Human Understanding, B. I. C. i. Sect. 8.

"is plain, by what has been said, that general "and universal belong not to the real existence "of things, but are the inventions and creatures "of the understanding, made by it for its own "use, and concern only signs, whether words or "ideas. Words are general, as has been said, "when used for signs of general ideas, and so "are applicable indifferently to many particular "things; and ideas are general, when they are "set up as the representatives of many particu-"lar things: but universality belongs not to "things themselves which are all of them par-"ticular in their existence; *even those words and* "*ideas which in their signification are general.* "When, therefore, we quit particulars, the "generals that rest are only creatures of our own "making; *their general nature being nothing but* "*the capacity they are put into by the understand-*"*ing of signifying or representing many particu-*"*lars. For the signification they have, is nothing* "*but a relation that by the mind of man is added* "*to them**." Nothing, in my apprehension, can be more exactly coincident with Berkeley's doctrine of abstraction. Here not only words but ideas are made signs; and a particular idea is made general, not by any change produced in it (for then it would be no longer the same idea), but "by being set up as the representative of

* B. III. C. iii. Sect. 11.

" many particular things." Universality, he observes, as it belongs not to things, belongs not even to " those words and ideas, which are all of " them particular in their existence, but general " in their signification." Again, the general nature of those ideas, is " nothing but the capacity " they are put into by the understanding of sig- " nifying or representing many particulars;" and if possible, still more explicitly, " the significa- " tion they have is nothing but a relation;" no alteration on their essence, " that by the mind " of man is added to them."

Some of the greatest admirers of that eminent philosopher seem to have overlooked entirely the preceding account of his sentiments on this subject, and through I know not what passion for the paradoxical (I should rather say, the impossible and unintelligible) have shewn an amazing zeal for defending the propriety of the hasty expressions which appear in the passages formerly referred to. Has not the mind of man, say they, an unlimited power in moulding and combining its ideas? The mind, it must be owned, hath an unlimited power in moulding and combining its ideas. It often produceth wonderful forms of its own, out of the materials originally supplied by sense; forms indeed of which there is no exemplar to be found in nature, centaurs, and griffins,

Gorgons, and hydras, and chimeras dire.

But still it must not attempt absolute impossibilities, by giving to its creature contradictory qualities. It must not attempt to conceive the same thing to be black and white at the same time, to be no more than three inches long, and yet no less than three thousand; to conceive two or more lines to be both equal and unequal, the same angle to be at once acute, obtuse, and right. These philosophers sagely remark, as a consequence of their doctrine, that the mind must be extremely slow in attaining so wonderful a talent; whereas, on the contrary, nothing can be more evident than that the power of abstracting, as I have explained it, is, to a certain degree, and must be, as early as the use of speech, and is consequently discoverable even in infants.

But if such an extraordinary faculty, as they speak of, were possible, I cannot, for my part, conceive what purpose it could serve. An idea hath been defined by some logicians, the form of resemblance of a thing in the mind, and the whole of its power and use in thinking is supposed to arise from an exact conformity to its archetype. What then is the use or power of that idea, to which there neither is nor can be any archetype in nature, which is merely a creature of the brain, a monster that bears not the likeness of any thing in the universe.

In the extensive sense in which Locke, who is

considered as the most strenuous supporter of that doctrine, uses the word Idea, even the perceptions of the senses, as I had occasion lately to remark, are included under that term. And if so, it is incontrovertible, that a particular idea often serves as the sign of a whole class. Thus in every one of Euclid's theorems, a particular triangle, and a particular parallelogram, and a particular circle, are employed as signs to denote all triangles, all parallelograms, and all circles When a geometrician makes a diagram with chalk upon a board, and from it demonstrates some property of a straight-lined figure, no spectator ever imagines, that he is demonstrating a property of nothing else but that individual white figure of five inches long which is before him. Every one is satisfied that he is demonstrating a property of all that order, whether more or less extensive, of which it is both an example and a sign; all the order being understood to agree with it in certain characters, however different in other respects. Nay, what is more, the mind with the utmost facility extends or contracts the representative power of the sign, as the particular occasion requires. Thus the same equilateral triangle will with equal propriety serve for the demonstration not only of a property of all equilateral triangles, but of a property of all isosceles triangles, or even of a property of all triangles whatever. Nay, so perfectly is this matter understood, that if the

demonstrator in any part should recur to some property, as to the length of a side, belonging to the particular figure he hath constructed, but not essential to the kind mentioned in the proposition, and which the particular figure is solely intended to represent, every intelligent observer would instantly detect the fallacy. So entirely for all the purposes of science doth a particular serve for a whole species or genus. Now, why one visible individual, or, in the style of the above mentioned author, why a particular idea of sight, should, in our reasonings, serve, without the smallest inconvenience, as a sign for an infinite number, and yet one conceivable individual, or a particular idea of imagination, should not be adapted to answer the same end, it will, I imagine, be utterly impossible to say.

There is, however, a considerable difference in kind between such signs as these, and the words of a language. Amongst all the individuals of a species, or even of the most extensive genus, there is still a natural connexion, as they agree in the specific or generic character But the connexion that subsisteth between words and things is, in its origin, arbitrary. Yet the difference in the effect is not so considerable as one would be apt to imagine. In neither case is it the matter, if I may be allowed the expression, but the power of the sign that is regarded by the mind. We find that even in demonstrative reasonings, signs

of the latter kind, or mere symbols, may be used with as much clearness and success as can be conferred by natural signs. The operations both of the algebraist and of the arithmetician, are strictly of the nature of demonstration. The one employs as signs the letters of the alphabet, the other certain numerical characters. In neither of these arts is it necessary to form ideas of the quantities and sums signified; in some instances it is even impossible, yet the equations and calculations resulting thence are not the less accurate and convincing.—So much for the nature and power of artificial signs.

Perhaps I have said too much on this subject; for, on a review of what I have written, I am even apprehensive, lest some readers imagine, that after quoting examples of the unintelligible from others, I have thought fit to produce a very ample specimen of my own. Every subject, it is certain, is not equally susceptible of perspicuity; but there is a material difference between an obscurity which ariseth purely from the nature of the subject, and that which is chargeable upon the style. Whatever regards the analysis of the operations of the mind, which is quicker than lightning in all her energies, must in a great measure be abstruse and dark. Let then the dissatisfied reader deign to bestow on the foregoing observations a second perusal; and though after that he should be as much at a loss as before, the

case may not be without remedy. Let him not therefore be discouraged from proceeding: there is still a possibility that the application of the principles, which I have been attempting to develope, will reflect some light on them: and if not, it is but a few minutes thrown away; for I do not often enter on such profound researches.

Section II.

The application of the preceding principles.

Now, to apply this doctrine to the use for which it was introduced, let us consider how we can account by it for these phenomena, that a man of sense should sometimes write nonsense and not know it, and that a man of sense should sometimes read nonsense and imagine he understands it.

In the preceding quotation from the Treatise on Human Nature, the author observes, that "notwithstanding that we do not annex distinct "and complete ideas to every term we make use "of, we may avoid talking nonsense, and may "perceive any repugnance among the ideas, as "well as if we had a full comprehension of them" This remark generally holds. Thus in matters that are perfectly familiar, and are level to an ordinary capacity, in simple narration, or in moral observations on the occurrences of life, a man of common understanding may be deceived by speci-

ous falsehood, but is hardly to be gulled by downright nonsense. Almost all the possible applications of the terms (in other words, all the acquired relations of the signs) have become customary to him. The consequence is, that an unusual application of any term is instantly detected; this detection breeds doubt, and this doubt occasions an immediate recourse to ideas. The recourse of the mind when in any degree puzzled with the signs, to the knowledge it has of the thing signified, is natural, and on such plain subjects perfectly easy. And of this recourse the discovery of the meaning, or of the unmeaningness of what is said, is the immediate effect. But in matters that are by no means familiar, or are treated in an uncommon manner, and in such as are of an abstruse and intricate nature, the case is widely different. There are particularly three sorts of writing wherein we are liable to be imposed on by words without meaning.

The first is, where there is an exuberance of metaphor. Nothing is more certain than that this trope, when temperately and appositely used, serves to add light to the expression, and energy to the sentiment. On the contrary, when vaguely and intemperately used, nothing can serve more effectually to cloud the sense, where there is sense, and by consequence to conceal the defect, where there is no sense to show. And this is the case, not only where there is in the same

sentence a mixture of discordant metaphors, but also where the metaphoric style is too long continued, and too far pursued *. The reason is obvious. In common speech the words are the immediate signs of the thought. But it is not so here; for when a person, instead of adopting metaphors that come naturally and opportunely in his way, rummages the whole world in quest of them, and piles them one upon another, when he cannot so properly be said to use metaphor, as to talk in metaphor, or rather when from metaphor he runs into allegory, and thence into enigma, his words are not the immediate signs of his thought; they are at best but the signs of the signs of his thought. His writing may then be called what Spenser not unjustly styled his Fairy Queen, *a perpetual allegory or dark conceit.* Most readers will account it much to bestow a transient glance on the literal sense, which lies nearest; but will never think of that meaning more remote, which the figures themselves are intended to signify. It is no wonder then that this sense, for the discovery of which it is necessary to see through a double veil, should, where it is, more readily escape our observation, and that where it is wanting we should not so quickly miss it.

* Ut modicus autem atque opportunus translationis usus illustrat orationem: ita frequens et obscurat et tædio complet; continuus vero in allegoriam et æniginata exit. QUINT. L. viii. C. 6.

There is, in respect of the two meanings, considerable variety to be found in the tropical style. In just allegory and similitude there is always a propriety, or, if you choose to call it, congruity, in the literal sense, as well as a distinct meaning or sentiment suggested, which is called the figurative sense. Examples of this are unnecessary. Again, where the figurative sense is unexceptionable, there is sometimes an incongruity in the expression of the literal sense. This is always the case in mixed metaphor, a thing not unfrequent even in good writers. Thus, when Addison remarks that "there is not a single view "of human nature, which is not sufficient "to *extinguish* the *seeds* of pride," he expresses a true sentiment somewhat incongruously; for the terms *extinguish* and *seeds* here metaphorically used, do not suit each other. In like manner, there is something incongruous in the mixture of tropes employed in the following passage from Lord Bolingbroke: "Nothing less "than the *hearts* of his people will content a "patriot prince, nor will he think his *throne* "established, till it is established *there*." Yet the thought is excellent. But in neither of these examples does the incongruity of the expression hurt the perspicuity of the sentence. Sometimes, indeed, the literal meaning involves a direct absurdity. When this is the case, as in the quotation from *the principles of paint-*

ing given in the preceding chapter, it is natural for the reader to suppose that there must be something under it; for is not easy to say how absurdly even just sentiments will sometimes be expressed. But when no such hidden sense can be discovered, what, in the first view, conveyed to our minds a glaring *absurdity*, is rightly on reflection denominated *nonsense*. We are satisfied that De Piles neither thought, nor wanted his readers to think, that Rubens was really the original performer, and God the copier. This then was not his meaning. But what he actually thought, and wanted them to think, it is impossible to elicit from his words. His words then may justly be termed *bold*, in respect of their literal import, but *unmeaning* in respect of the author's intention.

It may be proper here to observe, that some are apt to confound the terms *absurdity* and *nonsense* as synonymous, which they manifestly are not. An absurdity, in the strictest acceptation, is a proposition either intuitively or demonstratively false. Of this kind are these: "Three and two make seven." "All the "angles of a triangle are greater than two right "angles." That the former is false we know by intuition; that the latter is so, we are able to demonstrate. But the term is further extended to denote a notorious falsehood. If one should affirm, that "at the vernal equinox the sun rises in

" the north, and sets in the south," we should not hesitate to say, that he advances an absurdity; but still what he affirms has a meaning; insomuch, that on hearing the sentence we pronounce its falsity. Now *nonsense* is that whereof we cannot say either that it is true, or that it is false. Thus, when the Teutonic theosopher enounces, that "all " the voices of the celestial joyfulness, qualify, " commix, and harmonise in the fire which was " from eternity in the good quality," I should think it equally impertinent to aver the falsity as the truth of this enunciation. For, though the words grammatically form a sentence, they exhibit to the understanding no judgment, and consequently admit neither assent nor dissent. In the former instances I say the meaning, or what they affirm, is absurd; in the last instance I say there is no meaning, and therefore properly nothing is affirmed. In popular language, I own, the terms absurdity and nonsense are not so accurately distinguished. Absurd positions are sometimes called nonsensical. It is not common, on the other hand, to say of downright nonsense, that it comprises an absurdity.

Further, in the literal sense there may be nothing unsuitable, and yet the reader may be at a loss to find a figurative meaning, to which his expressions can with justice be applied. Writers immoderately attached to the florid, or highly figured diction, are often misled by a desire of

flourishing on the several attributes of a metaphor, which they have pompously ushered into the discourse, without taking the trouble to examine whether there be any qualities in the subject, to which these attributes can with justice and perspicuity be applied.

In one of the examples of the unintelligible above-cited, the author having once determined to represent the human mind under the metaphor of a country, hath involved in his thoughts the various objects which might be found in a country, but hath never dreamt of considering whether there be any things in the mind properly analogous to these. Hence the strange parade he makes with *regions*, and *recesses*, *hollow caverns*, and *private seats*, *wastes*, and *wildernesses*, *fruitful* and *cultivated tracts*, words which, though they have a precise meaning as applied to country, have no definite signification as applied to mind. With equal propriety he might have introduced all the variety which Satan discovered in the kingdom of darkness,

> Rocks, caves, lakes, fens, bogs, dens, and shades of death *;

or given us with Othello,

> ——— All *his* travel's history
> Wherein, *belike*, of antres vast and desarts idle,
> Rough quarries, rocks, and hills whose heads touch heaven,
> '*T had been his* hent to speak †.

* Paradise Lost. † Shakespeare.

So much for the immoderate use of metaphor, which, by the way, is the principal source of all the nonsense of orators and poets.

The second species of writing wherein we are liable to be imposed on by words without meaning, is that wherein the terms most frequently occurring, denote things which are of a complicated nature, and to which the mind is not sufficiently familiarised. Many of those notions which are called by philosophers mixt modes, come under this denomination. Of these the instances are numberless in every tongue; such as *government, church, state, constitution, polity, power, commerce, legislature, jurisdiction, proportion, symmetry, elegance.* It will considerably increase the danger of our being deceived by an unmeaning use of such terms, if they are besides (as very often they are) of so indeterminate, and consequently equivocal significations, that a writer, unobserved either by himself or by his reader, may slide from one sense of the term to another, till by degrees he fall into such applications of it as will make no sense at all. It deserves our notice also, that we are in much greater danger of terminating in this, if the different meanings of the same word have some affinity to one another, than if they have none. In the latter case, when there is no affinity, the transition from one meaning to another, is taking a very wide step, and what few writers are in any danger of; it is, besides, what will not

so readily escape the observation of the reader. So much for the second cause of deception, which is the chief source of all the nonsense of writers on politics and criticism.

The third and last, and I may add, the principal species of composition, wherein we are exposed to this illusion by the abuse of words, is that in which the terms employed are very abstract, and consequently of very extensive signification. It is an observation that plainly ariseth from the nature and structure of language, and may be deduced as a corollary from what hath been said of the use of artificial signs, that the more general any name is, as it comprehends the more individuals under it, and consequently requires the more extensive knowledge in the mind that would rightly apprehend it, the more it must have of indistinctness and obscurity. Thus the word *lion* is more distinctly apprehended by the mind than the word *beast*, beast than *animal*, animal than *being*. But there is, in what are called abstract subjects, a still greater fund of obscurity, than that arising from the frequent mention of the most general terms. Names must be assigned to those qualities as considered abstractly, which never subsist independently, or by themselves, but which constitute the generic characters and the specific differences of things. And this leads to a manner which is in many instances remote from the common use of speech, and therefore must be of

more difficult conception. The qualities thus considered as in a state of separation from the subjects to which they belong, have been not unfitly compared by a famous wit of the last century, to disembodied spirits:

> He could reduce all things to acts,
> And knew their natures and abstracts;
> Where entity and quiddity
> The ghosts of defunct bodies fly *.

As the manes of the departed heroes which Æneas saw in the infernal regions, were so constituted as effectually to elude the embrace of every living wight; in like manner the abstract qualities are so subtile as often to elude the apprehension of the most attentive mind. They have, I may say, too much volatility to be arrested, were it but for a moment.

> ——The flitting shadow *slips* away,
> Like winds or empty dreams that fly the day †. DRYDEN.

It is no wonder then, that a misapplication of such words, whether general or abstract, should frequently escape our notice. The more general any word is in its signification, it is the more liable to be abused by an improper or unmeaning application. A foreigner will escape discovery in a crowd, who would instantly be distinguished in a select company. A very general term is

* Hudibras, B. i. C. 1.

† ——Ter conprensa manus effugit imago,
Par levibus ventis, volucrique simillima somno.
VIRGIL, l. 6.

applicable alike to a multitude of different individuals, a particular term is applicable but to a few. When the rightful applications of a word are extremely nûmerous, they cannot all be so strongly fixed by habit, but that, for greater security, we must perpetually recur in our minds from the sign to the notion we have of the thing signified; and for the reason aforementioned, it is in such instances difficult precisely to ascertain this notion. Thus the latitude of a word, though different from its ambiguity, hath often a similar effect.

Further, it is a certain fact, that when we are much accustomed to particular terms, we can scarcely avoid fancying that we understand them, whether they have a meaning or not. The reason of this apprehension might easily be deduced from what hath been already said of the nature of signs. Let it suffice at present to observe the fact. Now, on ordinary subjects, if we adopt such a wrong opinion, we may easily be undeceived. The reason is, that on such subjects, the recourse from the sign to the thing signified is easy. For the opposite reason, if we are in such an error on abstract subjects, it is next to impossible that ever we should be undeceived. Hence it is, if without offence I may be indulged the observation, that in some popular systems of religion, the zeal of the people is principally exerted in support of certain favourite phrases, and a kind of technical

and idiomatical dialect to which their ears have been long enured, and which they consequently imagine they understand, but in which often there is nothing to be understood.

From such causes it hath arisen, that ever since the earliest days of philosophy, abstract subjects have been the principal province of altercation and logomachy; to the support of which, how far the artificial dialectic of the schoolmen, nay, the analytics and the metaphysics, the categories and the topics of the justly admired Stagyrite, have contributed, we have considered already*. Indeed at length disputation in the schools came to be so much a mechanical exercise, that if once a man had learned his logic, and had thereby come to understand the use of his weapons, and had gotten the knack of wielding them, he was qualified, without any other kind of knowledge, to defend any position whatsoever, how contradictory soever to common sense, and to the clearest discoveries of reason and experience. This art, it must be owned, observed a wonderful impartiality in regard to truth and error, or rather the most absolute indifference to both. If it was oftener employed in defence of error, that is not to be wondered at; for the way of truth is one, the ways of error are infinite. One qualified in the manner above mentioned could as successfully dispute on a subject of

* Book I. Chap. VI.

which he was totally ignorant, as on one with which he was perfectly acquainted. Success indeed tended then no more to decide the question, than a man's killing his antagonist in a duel serves now to satisfy any person of sense, that the victor had right on his side, and that the vanquished was in the wrong. Such an art as this could at bottom be no other, than a mere playing with words, used indeed grammatically, and according to certain rules established in the schools, but quite insignificant, and therefore incapable of conveying knowledge.

Vain wisdom all, and false philosophy.

This logic, between two and three centuries ago, received a considerable improvement from one Raimund Lully, a native of Majorca, who, by the ingenious contrivance of a few concentric moveable circles; on the borders of some of which were inscribed the subjects, of others the predicaments, and of others the forms of questions, not only superseded the little in point of invention which the scholastic logic had till then required, but much accelerated the operations of the artist. All was done by manual labour. All the circles, except the outmost which was immoveable, were turned upon the common center, one after another. In this manner the disposition of subjects, predicaments, and questions, was perpetually varied. All the proper questions every subject were suggested, and pertinent

answers supplied. In the same way did the working of the engine discover and apply the several topics of argument that might be used in support of any question. On this rare device, one Athanasius Kircher made great improvements in the last century. He boasted that by means of a coffer of arts, divided into a number of small receptacles, entirely of his own contriving, a thousand prodigies might be performed, which either could not be effected at all, by Lully's magical circles, or at least not so expeditiously.

Nothing can more fully prove, that the fruit of all such contrivances was mere words without knowledge, an empty show of science without the reality, than the ostentatious and absurd way in which the inventors and their votaries talk of these inventions. They would have us believe, that in these is contained a complete encyclopædia, that here we may discover all the arts and sciences as in their source, that hence all of them may be deduced *a priori*, as from their principles. Accordingly they treat all those as no better than quacks and empirics who have recourse to so homely a tutoress as experience.

The consideration of their pretensions hath indeed satisfied me, that the ridicule thrown on projectors of this kind, in the account given by

Swift * of a professor in the academy of Lagado, is not excessive, as I once thought it. The boasts of the academist on the prodigies performed by his frame, are far less extravagant than those of the above-mentioned artists, which in truth they very much resemble †.

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* Gulliver's Travels, Part iii.

† At what an amazing pitch of perfection doth Knittelius, a great admirer both of Lully and of Kircher, suppose that the adepts in this literary handicraft may arrive. The assiduous and careful practice will at length, according to him, fully instruct us, "Quomodo de quacunque re proposita "statim librum concipere, et in capita dividere, de quacunque re ex tem- "pore disserere, argumentari, de quocunque themate orationem formare, "orationem mentalem per horam, dies et septimanas protrahere, rem "quamcunque describere, per apologos et fabulas proponere, emblemata et "hieroglyphica invenire, de quacunque re historias expeditè scribere, ad- "versaria de quacunque re facere, de quacunque materia consilia dare, "omnes argutias ad unam regulam reducere, assumptum thema in infini- "tum multiplicare, ex falso rem demonstrare, quidlibet per quidlibet pro- "bare, possimus." Quirinus Kuhlmannus, another philosopher of the last century, in a letter to Kircher hath said with much good sense, concerning his coffer, "Lusus est ingeniosus, ingeniose Kircheri, non methodus, prima "fronte aliquid promittens, in recessu nihil solvens. Sine cista enim puer "nihil potest respondere, et in cista nihil praeter verba habet; tot profert "quot audit, sine intellectu, adinstar psittaci; et de illo jure dicitur "quod Lucon de philomela, *Vox est, praterea que nihil.*" Could any body imagine, that one who thought so justly of Kircher's device, was himself the author of another of the same kind. He had, it seems, contrived a scientific machine, that moved by wheels, with the conception of which he pretended to have been inspired by Heaven, but unfortunately he did not live to publish it. His only view, therefore, in the words above-quoted, was to depreciate Kircher's engine, that he might the more effectually recommend his own. "Multa passim," says Morhoff concerning him (Polyhistor. vol. I. lib. ii. cap. 5.) "de rotis suis combinatoriis jactat, quibus ordinatis unus homo "millies mille, imo millies milles mille scribas vincat; qui tamen primarius "rotarum scopus non est, sed grandior longe restat; nempe notitia pro-

So much for the third and last cause of illusion that was taken notice of, arising from the abuse of very general and abstract terms, which is the principal source of all the nonsense that hath

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"videntiæ æternæ, orbisque terrarum motus." And again, "Nec ullus "hominum tam insulso judicio præditus est, qui hac instituti one libros "doctos, novos, utiles, omni rerum scientia plenos, levissima opera edere "non potest." How much more modest is the professor of Lagado: "He "flatters himself indeed, that a more noble exalted thought than his never "sprang in any other man's head," but doth not lay claim to inspiration. "Every one knows," he adds, "how laborious the usual method is of at- "taining to arts and sciences: whereas, by his contrivance, the most igno- "rant person, at a reasonable charge, and with a little bodily labour, may "write books in philosophy, poetry, politics, law, mathematics, and theo- "logy," (no mention of history) "without the least assistance from genius "and study." He is still modest enough to require time, and some cor- poreal exercise, in order to the composing of a treatise; but those artists propose to bring a proficient "*statim* librum concipere" instantly, "levis- "sima opera," with little or no pains. I shall conclude with laying before the reader, the opinion of Lord Verulam, concerning the Lullian art, an opinion that may with equal justice be applied to the devices of all Lully's followers and imitators. "Neque tamen illud prætermittendum, quod "nonnulli viri magis tumidi quam docti insudarunt circa methodum quan- "dam, legitimæ methodi nomine haud dignam, cum potius sit methodus "impostura, quæ tamen quibusdam ardelionibus acceptissima procul dubio "fuerit. Hæc methodus ita scientiæ alicujus guttulas aspergit, ut quis "sciolus specie nonnulla eruditionis ad ostentationem possit abuti. Talis "fuit ars Lullii, talis typocosmia a nonnullis exarata; quæ nihil aliud "fuerunt, quam vocabulorum artis cujusque massa et acervus; ad hoc, ut "qui voces artis habeant in promptu, etiam artes ipsas perdidicisse existi- "mentur. Hujus generis collectanea officinam referunt veteramentariam, "ubi præsegmina multa reperiuntur, sed nihil quod alicujus sit pretii." De Augm. Scien. lib. vi. cap. 2. I shall only observe, that when he calls this art a method of imposture, he appears to mean that it puts an imposi- tion upon the mind, not so much by infusing error instead of truth, as by amusing us with mere words instead of useful knowledge.

been vented by metaphysicians, mystagogues, and theologians.

CHAP. VIII.

The extensive usefulness of Perspicuity.

SECTION I.

When is obscurity apposite, if ever it be apposite, and what kind?

HAVING fully considered the nature of perspicuity, and the various ways in which the laws relating to it may be transgressed, I shall now inquire, whether to be able to transgress with dexterity in any of those ways, by speaking obscurely, ambiguously, or unintelligibly, be not as essential to the perfection of eloquence, as to be able to speak perspicuously.

Eloquence, it may be said, hath been defined to be, that art or talent whereby the discourse is adapted to produce the effect which the speaker intends it should produce in the hearer*. May

* Book I. Chap. I.

not then obscurity, on some occasions, be as conducive to the effect intended, as perspicuity is on other occasions? If the latter is necessary in order to inform, is not the former necessary in order to deceive? If perspicuity be expedient in convincing us of truth, and persuading us to do right, is not its contrary, obscurity, expedient in effecting the contrary; that is, in convincing us of what is false, and in persuading us to do wrong? And may not either of these effects be the aim of the speaker?

This way of arguing is far more plausible than just. To be obscure, or even unintelligible, may, I acknowledge, in some cases, contribute to the design of the orator, yet it doth not follow, that obscurity is as essential to eloquence as the opposite quality. It is the design of the medical art to give health and ease to the patient, not pain and sickness, and that the latter are sometimes the foreseen effects of the medicines employed, doth not invalidate the general truth. Whatever be the real intention of a speaker or writer, whether to satisfy our reason of what is true or of what is untrue, whether to incline our will to what is right or to what is wrong, still he must propose to effect his design by informing our understanding: nay more, without conveying to our minds some information, he might as well attempt to achieve his purpose by addressing us in an unknown tongue. General-

ly, therefore, this quality of style, perspicuity, is as requisite in seducing to evil, as in exciting to good, in defending error, as in supporting truth.

I am sensible that this position must appear to many no other than a paradox. What! say they, is it not as natural to vice and falsehood to sculk in darkness, as it is to truth and virtue, to appear in light? Doubtless it is in some sense, but in such a sense as is not in the least repugnant to the doctrine here advanced. That therefore we may be satisfied of the justness of this theory, it will be necessary to consider a little further the nature both of persuasion and of conviction.

With regard to the former, it is evident, that the principal scope for employing persuasion is, when the mind balances, or may be supposed to balance, in determining what choice to make in respect of conduct, whether to do this, or to do that, or at least whether to do, or to forbear. And it is equally evident, that the mind would never balance a moment in choosing, unless there were motives to influence it on each of the opposite sides. In favour of one side perhaps is the love of glory, in favour of the other the love of life. Now, whichever side the orator espouses, there are two things that must carefully be studied by him, as was observed on a

former occasion *; the first is, to excite in his hearers that desire or passion which favours his design; the second is, to satisfy their judgments, that there is a connexion between the conduct to which he would persuade them, and the gratification of the desire or passion which he excites. The first is effected by communicating natural and lively ideas of the object; the second by arguments from experience, analogy, testimony, or the plurality of chances. To the communication of natural and vivid ideas, the pathetic circumstances formerly enumerated †, are particularly conducive.—Now to the efficacious display of those circumstances, nothing can be more unfriendly than obscurity, whose direct tendency is to confound our ideas, or rather to blot them altogether. And as to the second requisite, the argumentative part, that can never require obscurity, which doth not require even a deviation from truth. It may be as true, and therefore as demonstrable, that my acting in one way will promote my safety, or what I regard as my interest, as that my acting in the contrary way will raise my fame. And even when an orator is under a necessity of replying to what hath been advanced by an antagonist, in order to weaken the impression he hath made, or to lull the pas-

* Book I. Chap. V. Sect. iv. See the analysis of persuasion.

† Book I. Chap. VII. Sect. v. The explication and use of those circumstances.

sion he hath roused, it is not often that he is obliged to avail himself of any false or sophistical reasoning, which alone can render obscurity useful. Commonly, on the contrary, he hath only to avail himself of an artful exhibition of every circumstance of the case, that can any way contribute to invalidate or to subvert his adversary's plea, and consequently to support his own. Now it is a certain fact, that in almost all complicated cases, real circumstances will be found in favour of each side of the question. Whatever side therefore the orator supports, it is his business, in the first place, to select those circumstances that are favourable to his own plea, or which excite the passion that is directly instrumental in promoting his end; secondly, to select those circumstances that are unfavourable to the plea of his antagonist, and to add to all these such clearness and energy by his eloquence, as will effectually fix the attention of the hearers upon them, and thereby withdraw their regards from those circumstances, equally real, which favour the other side. In short, it is the business of the two antagonists to give different or even opposite directions to the attention of the hearers; but then it is alike the interest of each to set those particular circumstances, to which he would attract their notice, in as clear a light as possible. And it is only by acting thus that he can hope to effectuate his purpose.

Perhaps it will be urged, that though, where the end is persuasion, there doth not seem to be an absolute necessity of sophistry and obscurity on either side, as there is not on either side an absolute necessity for supporting falsehood; the case is certainly different when the end is to convince the understanding. In this case, whatever is spoken on one side of the question, as it is spoken in support of error, must be sophistical: and sophistry seems to require a portion of obscurity, to serve her as a veil, that she may escape discovery. Even here, however, the case is not so plain, as at first it may be thought. Sophistry (which hath sometimes been successfully used in support of truth) is not always necessary for the support of error. Error may be supported, and hath been often strenuously supported, by very cogent arguments and just reasoning.

But as this position will probably appear to many very extraordinary, if not irrational, it will be necessary to examine the matter more minutely. It is true, indeed, that in subjects susceptible of demonstrative proof, error cannot be defended but by sophistry; and sophistry, to prevent detection, must shelter herself in obscurity. This results from the nature of scientific evidence, as formerly explained*. This kind of

* Book I. Chap. V. Sect. ii.

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evidence is solely conversant about the invariable relations of number and extension, which relations it evolves by a simple chain of axioms. An assertion, therefore, that is contrary to truth in these matters, is also absurd and inconceivable; nor is there any scope here for contrariety of proofs. Accordingly, debate and argumentation have no footing here. The case is far otherwise with moral evidence, which is of a complex nature, which admits degrees, which is almost always combated by opposite proofs, and these, though perhaps lower in degree, as truly of the nature of proof and evidence, as those whereby they are opposed. The probability, on the whole, as was shown already *, lies in the proportion which the contrary proofs, upon comparison, bear to one another; a proportion which, in complicated cases, it is often difficult, and sometimes even impossible, to ascertain. The speakers, therefore, on the opposite sides have each real evidence to insist on; and there is here the same scope as in persuasory discourses, for all the arts that can both rivet the hearer's attention on the circumstances of the proof favourable to the speaker's design, and divert his attention from the contrary circumstances. Nor is there, in ordinary cases, that is, in all cases really dubious and disputable, any necessity,

* Book I. Chap. V. Sect. ii.

on either side, for what is properly called sophistry.

The natural place for sophistry is, when a speaker finds himself obliged to attempt the refutation of arguments that are both clear and convincing. For an answerer to overlook such arguments altogether might be dangerous, and to treat them in such a manner as to elude their force, requires the most exquisite address. A little sophistry here will, no doubt, be thought necessary, by one with whom victory hath more charms than truth; and sophistry, as was hinted above, always implies obscurity; for that a sophism should be mistaken for an argument, can be imputed only to this, that it is not rightly understood.

As from what hath been said, we may learn to distinguish the few cases wherein a violation of the laws of perspicuity may be pertinent to the purpose of the orator, I shall next inquire what kind of violation is in such cases best fitted for answering his design. It is evident it cannot be the first, which for distinction's sake was denominated by the general name Obscurity. When a hearer not only doth not understand, but is himself sensible that he doth not understand what is spoken, it can produce no effect on him, but weariness, suspicion, and disgust, which must be prejudicial to the intention. Although it is not always necessary, that every thing advanced by the speaker

should convey information to the hearer, it is necessary that he should believe himself informed by what is said, ere he can be convinced or persuaded by it. For the like reason, it is not the second kind of transgression, or any discoverable ambiguity in what is spoken, that is adapted to the end of speaking. This fault, if discovered, though not of so bad consequence as the former, tends to distract the attention of the hearer, and thereby to weaken the impression which the words would otherwise have made. It remains, that it is only the third and last kind above discussed, when what is said, though in itself unintelligible, a hearer may be led to imagine that he understands. When ambiguities can artfully be made to elude discovery, and to conduce to this deception, they may be used with success *. Now, though nothing would seem to be easier than this kind of style, when an author falls into it naturally; that is, when he deceives himself as well as his reader; nothing is more difficult when attempted of design. It is besides requisite, if this manner must be continued for any time, that it be artfully blended with some glimpses of meaning; else, to persons of discernment, the charm will at last be dissolved, and the nothingness of what hath been spoken will be detected;

* That they are often successful this way hath been justly remarked by Aristotle. Των δ' ονοματων, τω μεν σοφιστη ὁμωνυμιαι χρησιμοι, παρ αταυτας γαρ κακουργει. Ρητ. γ.

nay, even the attention of the unsuspecting multitude, when not relieved by any thing that is level to their comprehension, will infallibly flag. The invocation in the Dunciad admirably suits the orator who is unhappily reduced to the necessity of taking shelter in the unintelligible.

> Of darkness visible so much be lent,
> As half to show, half veil the deep intent.

There is but one subject in nature (if what is unintelligible can be called a subject) on which the appetite of nonsense is utterly insatiable. The intelligent reader needs not be informed that I mean what is commonly termed mystical theology; a subject whose supposed sublimity serves with its votaries to apologise for its darkness. That here indeed there may be found readers who can, not only with patience but with avidity, not only through pages but through volumes, lose themselves in wandering over a maze of words unenlightened by a single ray of sense, the translation of the works of Jacob Behmen, and our modern Hutchinsonian performances, are lamentable proofs. But this case is particular.

After all, we are not to imagine, that the sophistical and unmeaning, when it may in some sense be said to be proper, or even necessary, are, in respect of the ascendant gained over the mind of the hearer, ever capable of rivalling conclusive arguments perspicuously expressed. The effect

of the former is at most only to confound the judgment, and by the confusion it produceth, to silence contradiction; the effect of the latter is, fully to convince the understanding. The impression made by the first can no more be compared in distinctness and vivacity to that effected by the second, than the dreams of a person asleep to his perceptions when awake. Hence we may perceive an eminent disadvantage, which the advocate for error, when compelled to recur to words without meaning, must labour under. The weapons he is obliged to use are of such a nature, that there is much greater difficulty in managing them, than in managing those that must be employed in the cause of truth, and when managed ever so dexterously, they cannot do equal execution. A still greater disadvantage the patron of the cause of injustice or of vice must grapple with. For though he may find real motives to urge in defence of his plea, as wealth perhaps, or ease, or pleasure, he hath to encounter or elude the moral sentiments which, of all motives whatever, take the strongest hold of the heart. And if he find himself under a necessity of attempting to prove that virtue and right are on his side, he hath his way to grope through a labyrinth of sophistry and nonsense.

So much for the legitimate use of the unintelligible in oratory.

SECTION II.

Objections answered.

BUT are there not some subjects, and even some kinds of composition, which from their very nature demand a dash of obscurity? Doth not decency often require this? Doth not delicacy require this? And is not this even essential to the allegoric style, and to the enigmatic? As to the manner which decency sometimes requires, it will be found on examination to stand opposed more properly to vivacity than to perspicuity of style, and will therefore fall to be considered afterwards.

I shall now, therefore, examine, in the first place, in what respect delicacy may be said to demand obscurity. Thus much indeed is evident, that delicacy often requires that certain sentiments be rather insinuated than expressed; in other words, that they be not directly spoken, but that sufficient ground be given to infer them from what is spoken. Such sentiments are, though improperly, considered as obscurely expressed, for this special reason, that it is not by the first operation of the intellect, an apprehension of the meaning of what is said, but by a second operation, a reflection on what is implied or presupposed, that they are discovered; in which double operation of the mind, there is a faint re-

semblance to what happens in the case of real obscurity. But in the case of which I am treating, it is the thought more than the expression that serves for a veil to the sentiment suggested. If therefore in such instances there may be said to be obscurity, it is an obscurity which is totally distinct from obscurity of language.

That this matter may be better understood, we must carefully distinguish between the thought expressed, and the thought hinted. The latter may be affirmed to be obscure, because it is not expressed, but hinted; whereas the former, with which alone perspicuity of style is concerned, must always be expressed with clearness, otherwise the sentiment will never be considered as either beautiful or delicate *. I shall illustrate this by examples.

No subject requires to be treated more delicately than praise, especially when it is given to a person present. Flattery is so nauseous to a liberal spirit, that even when praise is merited, it is disagreeable at least to unconcerned hearers, if it appear in a garb which adulation commonly assumes. For this reason, an encomium or compliment never

* This will serve to explain what Bouhours, a celebrated French critic, and a great advocate for perspicuity, hath advanced on this subject, "Sou-"venez-vous que rien n'est plus opposé à la veritable delicatesse que d'ex-"primer trop les choses, et que le grand art consiste à ne pas tout dire sur "certains sujets; à glisser dessus plûtot que d'y appuyer; en un mot, à en "laisser penser aux autres plus que l'on n'en dit." Maniere de bien penser, &c.

succeeds so well as when it is indirect. It then appears to escape the speaker unawares, at a time that he seems to have no intention to commend. Of this kind the following story will serve as an example: "A gentleman who had an employment "bestowed on him, without so much as being "known to his benefactor, waited upon the great "man who was so generous, and was beginning to "say, he was infinitely obliged——*Not at all*, says "the patron, turning from him to another: *Had "I known a more deserving man in England, he "should not have had it* *." Here the apparent intention of the minister was only to excuse the person on whom the favour had been conferred, the trouble of making an acknowledgment, by assuring him that it had not been given from personal attachment or partiality. But whilst he appears intending only to say this, he says what implies the greatest praise, and, as it were, accidentally betrays the high opinion he entertained of the other's merit. If he had said directly, "You are "the most deserving man that I know in Eng-"land," the answer, though implying no more than what he did say, would have been not only indelicate but intolerable. On so slight a turn in the expression it frequently depends, whether the same sentiment shall appear delicate or gross, complimental or affronting.

Sometimes praise is very successfully and very

* Tatler, No. 17.

delicately conveyed under an appearance of chagrin. This constitutes the merit of that celebrated thought of Boileau: "to imagine in such a "warlike age, which abounds in Achilleses, that "we can write verses as easily as they take "towns*!" The poet seems only venting his complaints against the unreasonable expectations of some persons, and at the same time discovers, as by chance, the highest admiration of his monarch and the heroes who served him, by suggesting the incredible rapidity of the success with which their arms were crowned.

Sometimes also commendation will be couched with great delicacy under an air of reproach. An example of this I shall give from the paper lately quoted: "*My Lord*, said the Duke of B——m, "after his libertine way to the Earl of O——y, "*you will certainly be damn'd.* How, my Lord, "said the earl with some warmth. *Nay*, replied "the duke, *there's no help for it, for it is positive-*"*ly said, Cursed is he of whom all men speak well*†." A still stronger example in this way, we have from the Drapier, who, speaking to Lord Molesworth of the seditious expressions of which he had himself been accused, says, "I have witnesses "ready to depose, that your Lordship hath said "and writ fifty times worse, and what is still

* Et dans ce tems guerrier et fecond en Achilles
Croit que l'on fait les vers, comme l'on prend les villes.

† Tatler, No. 17.

"an aggravation, with infinitely more wit and "learning, and stronger arguments: So that as po- "litics run, I do not know a person of more ex- "ceptionable principles than yourself: And if "ever I shall be discovered, I think you will be "bound in honour to pay my fine and support "me in prison, or else I may chance to inform a- "gainst you by way of reprisal *."

I shall produce one other instance from the same hand, of an indirect, but successful manner of praising, by seeming to invert the course of the obligation, and to represent the person obliging as the person obliged. Swift, in a letter to the Archbishop of Dublin, speaking of Mr Harley, then Lord High Treasurer, afterwards earl of Oxford, by whose means the Irish clergy had obtained from the queen, the grant of the first fruits and tenths, says, "I told him, that for my part, I "thought he was obliged to the clergy of Ireland, "for giving him an occasion of gratifying the "pleasure he took in doing good to the church †."

It may be observed, that delicacy requires indirectness of manner no less in censure than in praise. If the one, when open and direct, is liable to be branded with the name of *flattery*, the other is no less exposed to the opprobrious appellation of *abuse*, both alike, though in different ways, offensive to persons of taste and breeding. I shall

* Drapier's Let. 5. † Swift's Let. 10.

give, from the work last quoted, a specimen (I cannot say of great delicacy) in stigmatising, but at least of such an indirect manner as is sufficient to screen the author from the imputation of downright rudeness. "I hear you are like to be "the sole opposer of the bank; and you will cer- "tainly miscarry, because it would prove a most "perfidious thing. Bankrupts are always for set- "ting up banks; how then can you think a bank "will fail of a majority in both houses*?" It must be owned that the veil here is extremely thin, too thin to be altogether decent, and serves only to save from the imputation of scurrility a very severe reproach. It is the manner which constitutes one principal distinction between the libeller and the satirist. I shall give one instance more of this kind from another work of the same author. "To smooth the way for the return of "popery in Queen Mary's time, the grantees "were confirmed by the pope in the possession of "the abbey-lands. But the bishop tells us, that "this confirmation was fraudulent and invalid. I "shall believe it to be so, although I happen to "read it in his Lordship's history†." Thus he insinuates, or signifies by implication, that his Lordship's history is full of lies. Now, from all the specimens I have exhibited, it will, I suppose, sufficiently appear to any person of common un-

* Swift's Letters, 40.

† Preface to the Bishop of Sarem's Introduction to the 3d volume of his History of the Reformation.

derstanding, that the obscurity required by delicacy, either in blaming or in commending, is totally distinct in kind from obscurity of expression, with which none of the examples above-quoted is in the smallest degree chargeable.

The illustrations I have given on this topic will contribute in some measure to explain the obscurity that is requisite in allegories, apologues, parables and enigmas. In all these sorts of composition, there are two senses plainly intended, the literal and the figurative: the language is solely the sign of the literal sense, and the literal sense is the sign of the figurative. Perspicuity in the style, which exhibits only the literal sense, is so far from being to be dispensed with here, that it is even more requisite in this kind of composition than in any other. Accordingly, you will perhaps nowhere find more perfect models both of simplicity and of perspicuity of style, than in the parables of the gospel. Indeed, in every sort of composition of a figurative character, more attention is always and justly considered as due to this circumstance than in any other sort of writing. Æsop's fables are a noted example of this remark. In further confirmation of it, we may observe that no pieces are commonly translated with greater ease and exactness, than the allegorical; and that even by those who apprehend nothing of the mystical sense. This sure could never be the case, if the obscurity were chargeable on the language.

The same thing holds here as in painting emblems, or graving devices. It may, without any fault in the painter or engraver, puzzle you to discover what the visible figure of the sun, for example, which you observe in the emblem or the device, was intended to signify; but if you are at a loss to know whether it be the figure of the sun or the figure of the moon, that you are looking at, he must have been undoubtedly a bungling artist. The body, therefore, if I may so express myself, of the emblem, or of the device, and precisely for the same reason, of the riddle or of the allegory, must be distinctly exhibited so as scarcely to leave room for a possibility of mistake. The exercise that in any of these performances is given to ingenuity, ought wholly to consist in reading the soul.

I know no style to which darkness of a certain sort is more suited than to the prophetical. Many reasons might be assigned which render it improper that prophesy should be perfectly understood before it be accomplished. Besides, we are certain that a prediction may be very dark before the accomplishment, and yet so plain afterwards, as scarcely to admit a doubt in regard to the events suggested. It does not belong to critics to give laws to prophets, nor does it fall within the confines of any human art, to lay down rules for a species of composition so far above art. Thus far, however, we may warrantably

observe, that when the prophetic style is imitated in poetry, the piece ought, as much as possible, to possess the character above mentioned. This character, in my opinion, is possessed in a very eminent degree by Mr Gray's ode called *The Bard*. It is all darkness to one who knows nothing of the English history, posterior to the reign of Edward the first, and all light to one who is well acquainted with that history. But this is a kind of writing whose peculiarities can scarcely be considered as exceptions from ordinary rules.

But further, may not a little obscurity be sometimes very suitable in dramatic composition? Sometimes indeed, but very seldom; else the purpose of the exhibition would be lost. The drama is a sort of moral painting, and characters must be painted as they are. A blunderer cannot properly be introduced conversing with all the perspicuity and precision of a critic, no more than a clown can be justly represented expressing himself in the polished style of a courtier. In like manner, when the mind is in confusion and perplexity, arising from the sudden conflict of violent passions, the language will of necessity partake of the perturbation. Incoherent hints, precipitate sallies, vehement exclamations, interrupted perhaps by feeble checks from religion or philosophy, in short, every thing imperfect, abrupt, and desultory, are the natural expressions of a

soul overwhelmed in such a tumult. But even here it may be said with truth, that to one skilled in reading Nature, there will arise a light out of the darkness, which will enable him to penetrate farther into the spirit, than he could have done by the help of the most just, most perspicuous, and most elaborate description. This might be illustrated, were it necessary, but a case so singular is hardly called an exception. The dramatist then can but rarely claim to be indulged in obscurity of language, the fabulist never.

CHAP. IX.

May there not be an excess of perspicuity?

I SHALL conclude this subject with inquiring whether it be possible that perspicuity should be carried to excess. It hath been said, that too much of it has a tendency to cloy the reader, and, as it gives no play to the rational and active powers of the mind, will soon grow irksome through excess of facility. In this manner some able critics have expressed themselves on this point, who will be found not to differ in sentiment, but only in expression from the principles above laid down.

The objection ariseth manifestly from the confounding of two objects, the common and the clear, and thence very naturally their contraries, the new and the dark, that are widely different. If you en-

tertain your reader solely or chiefly with thoughts that are either trite or obvious, you cannot fail soon to tire him. You introduce few or no new sentiments into his mind, you give him little or no information, and consequently afford neither exercise to his reason, nor entertainment to his fancy. In what we read, and what we hear, we always seek for something in one respect or other new, which we did not know, or at least attend to before. The less we find of this, the sooner we are tired. Such a trifling minuteness, therefore, in narration, description, or argument, as an ordinary apprehension would render superfluous, is apt quickly to disgust us. The reason is, not because any thing is said too perspicuously, but because many things are said which ought not to be said at all. Nay, if those very things had been expressed obscurely (and the most obvious things may be expressed obscurely), the fault would have been much greater; because it would have required a good deal of attention to discover what after we had discovered it, we should perceive not to be of sufficient value for requiting our pains. To an author of this kind we should be apt to apply the character which Bassanio in the play gives of Gratiano's conversation: "He speaks an infinite "deal of nothing. His reasons are as two grains "of wheat hid in two bushels of chaff: you shall "seek all day ere you find them, and when you "have them they are not worth the search*." It

* Shakespeare's Merchant of Venice.

is therefore futility in the thought, and not perspicuity in the language, which is the fault of such performances. There is as little hazard that a piece shall be faulty in this respect, as that a mirror shall be too faithful in reflecting the images of objects, or that the glasses of a telescope shall be too transparent.

At the same time, it is not to be dissembled that, with inattentive readers, a pretty numerous class, darkness frequently passes for depth. To be perspicuous, on the contrary, and to be superficial, are regarded by them as synonymous. But it is not surely to their absurd notions that our language ought to be adapted.

It is proper, however, before I dismiss this subject, to observe, that every kind of style doth not admit an equal degree of perspicuity. In the ode, for instance, it is difficult, sometimes perhaps impossible, to reconcile the utmost perspicuity with that force and vivacity which the species of composition requires. But even in this case, though we may justly say, that the genius of the performance renders obscurity to a certain degree excusable, nothing can ever constitute it an excellence. Nay, it may still be affirmed with truth, that the more a writer can reconcile this quality of perspicuity with that which is the distinguishing excellence of the species of composition, his success will be the greater.

THE

PHILOSOPHY

OF

RHETORIC.

BOOK III.

THE DISCRIMINATING PROPERTIES OF ELOCUTION.

CHAP. I.

Of vivacity as depending on the Choice of Words.

HAVING discussed the subject of perspicuity, by which the discourse is fitted to inform the understanding, I come now to those qualities of style by which it is adapted to please the imagination, and consequently to awake and fix the attention. These I have already denominated vivacity and elegance, which correspond to the two sources, whence, as was observed in the beginning of this inquiry*, the

* Book I. Chap. I.

merit of an address to the fancy immediately results. By vivacity of expression, resemblance is attained, as far as language can contribute to the attainment; by elegance, dignity of manner.

I begin with vivacity, whose nature (though perhaps the word is rarely used in a signification so extensive) will be best understood by considering the several principles from which it arises. There are three things in style on which its vivacity depends, the choice of words, their number, and their arrangement.

The first thing then that comes to be examined, is the words chosen. Words are either proper terms or rhetorical tropes; and whether the one or the other, they may be regarded not only as signs, but as sounds; and consequently as capable, in certain cases, of bearing in some degree a natural resemblance or affinity to the things signified. These three articles therefore, proper terms, rhetorical tropes, and the relation which the sound may be made to bear to the sense, I shall, on the first topic, the choice of words, consider severally, as far as concerns the subject of vivacity.

Section I.

Proper terms.

I begin with proper terms, and observe that the quality of chief importance in these for producing the end proposed, is their *specialty*. No-

thing can contribute more to enliven the expression, than that all the words employed be as particular and determinate in their signification, as will suit with the nature and the scope of the discourse. The more general the terms are, the picture is the fainter; the more special they are, it is the brighter. The same sentiments may be expressed with equal justness, and even perspicuity, in the former way, as in the latter; but as the colouring will in that case be more languid, it cannot give equal pleasure to the fancy, and by consequence will not contribute so much either to fix the attention, or to impress the memory. I shall illustrate this doctrine by some examples.

In the song of Moses, occasioned by the miraculous passage of the Israelites through the Red Sea, the inspired poet, speaking of the Egyptians, says, "They *sank* as *lead* in the mighty waters *." Make but a small alteration on the expression, and say, "They *fell* as *metal* in the mighty waters;" and the difference in the effect will be quite astonishing. Yet the sentiment will be equally just, and in either way the meaning of the author can hardly be mistaken. Nor is there another alteration made upon the sentence, but that the terms are rendered more comprehensive or generical. To this alone, therefore, the diffe-

* Exod. xv. 10.

rence of the effect must be ascribed. *To sink* is as it were the species, as it implies only "falling "or moving downwards in a liquid element;" *to fall* answers to the genus *; in like manner, *lead* is the species, *metal* is the genus.

"Consider," says our Lord, "the lilies how "they grow: they toil not, they spin not; and "yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glo- "ry, was not arrayed like one of these. If then "God so clothe the grass which to-day is in the "field, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, how "much more will he clothe you †?" Let us here adopt a little of the tasteless manner of modern paraphrasts, by the substitution of more general terms, one of their many expedients of infrigidating, and let us observe the effect produced by this change. "Consider the flowers, how they "gradually increase in their size, they do no "manner of work, and yet I declare to you, that "no king whatever, in his most splendid habit,

* I am sensible that genus and species are not usually, and perhaps cannot be so properly applied to verbs; yet there is in the reference which the meanings of two verbs sometimes bear to each other what nearly resembles this relation. It is only when *to fall* means to move downwards, as a brick from a chimney-top or a pear from the tree, that it may be denominated a genus in respect of the verb *to sink*. Sometimes, indeed, the former denotes merely a sudden change of posture from erect to prostrate, as when a man who stands upon the ground is said to fall, though he remain still on the ground. In this way we speak of the fall of a tower, of a house, or of a wall.

† Luke xii. 27 and 28.

" is dressed up like them. If then God in his " providence doth so adorn the vegetable produc- " tions, which continue but a little time on the " land, and are afterwards put into the fire, how " much more will he provide clothing for you?" How spiritless is the same sentiment rendered by these small variations? The very particularising of *to-day* and *to-morrow*, is infinitely more expressive of transitoriness, than any description wherein the terms are general, that can be substituted in its room.

Yet to a cold annotator, a man of mere intellection without fancy, the latter exhibition of the sentiment would appear the more emphatical of the two. Nor would he want some show of reason for this preference. As a specimen, therefore, of a certain mode of criticising, not rarely to be met with, in which there is I know not what semblance of judgment without one particle of taste, I shall suppose a critic of this stamp entering on the comparison of the preceding quotation and the paraphrase. " In the one," he would argue, " the beauty of only one sort of " flowers is exalted above the effects of human " industry, in the other the beauty of the whole " kind. In the former one individual monarch " is said not to have equalled them in splendor, " in the latter it is affirmed that no monarch " whatever can equal them." However specious

this way of reasoning may be, we are certain that it is not solid, because it doth not correspond with the principles of our nature. Indeed what was explained above*, in regard to abstraction, and the particularity of our ideas, properly so called, may serve in a great measure to account for the effect which specialty hath upon the imagination. Philosophy, which strictly considered addresseth only the understanding, and is conversant about abstract truth, abounds in general terms, because these alone are adequate to the subject treated. On the contrary, when the address is made by eloquence to the fancy, which requires a lively exhibition of the object presented to it, those terms must be culled that are as particular as possible, because it is solely by these that the object can be depicted. And even the most rigid philosopher, if he choose that his disquisitions be not only understood but relished (and without being relished they are understood to little purpose), will not disdain sometimes to apply to the imagination of his disciples, mixing the pleasant with the useful. This is one way of sacrificing to the Graces.

But I proceed to give examples in such of the different parts of speech as are most susceptible of this beauty. The first shall be in the verbs.

* Book II. Chap. VII. Sect. 1.

It seem'd as there the British Neptune stood,
With all his hosts of waters at command;
Beneath them to *submit* th' officious flood;
And with his trident *shov'd* them off the sand *.

The words *submit* and *shov'd* are particularly expressive of the action here ascribed to Neptune. The former of these verbs *submit* may indeed be called a *latinism* in the signification it hath in this passage. But such idioms, though improper in prose, are sometimes not ungraceful in the poetic dialect. If in the last line instead of *shov'd*, the poet had used the verb *raised*, which, though not equivalent, would have conveyed much the same meaning, the expression had been fainter †.

The next example shall be in adjectives and participles.

The kiss *snatch'd* hasty from the *sidelong* maid,
On purpose guardless ———‡.

Here both the words *sidelong* and *snatch'd* are very significant, and contribute much to the vivacity of the expression. *Taken* or *ta'en* substituted for the latter, would be much weaker. It may be remarked, that it is principally in those parts of speech which regard life and action that this species of energy takes place.

* Dryden's Year of Wonders.

† In this instance Dryden hath even improved on the original he imitated; which is not often the case either of translators or of imitators. Virgil says simply, "*Levat* ipse tridenti."

‡ Thomson's Winter.

I shall give one in nouns from Milton, who says concerning Satan, when he had gotten into the garden of Eden,

> Thence up he flew, and on the tree of life
> Sat like a *cormorant* *.

If for cormorant he had said *bird of prey*, which would have equally suited both the meaning and the measure, the image would still have been good, but weaker than it is by this specification.

In adjectives the same author hath given an excellent example, in describing the attitude in which Satan was discovered by Ithuriel and his company, when that malign spirit was employed in infusing pernicious thoughts into the mind of our first mother,

> ——Him there they found
> *Squat* like a toad, close at the ear of Eve †.

No word in the language could have so happily expressed the posture, as that which the poet hath chosen.

It will be easy from the same principles to illustrate a remark of the Stagyrite, on the epithet *rosy finger'd*, which Homer hath given to the morning. This, says the critic, is better than if he had said *purple-finger'd*, and far better than if he had said *red-finger'd* ‡. Aristotle hath observed the

* Paradise Lost, B. iv.

† Ibid.

‡ Arist. Rhet. L. 3. Διαφερει δ' ειπειν, οιον ροδοδακτυλος ηως μαγγον η φοινικοδακτυλος, η ετι φαυλοτερον ερυθροδακτυλος.

effect solely in respect of beauty, but the remark holds equally true of these epithets in respect of vivacity. This in a great measure may be deduced from what hath been said already. Of all the above adjectives the last is the most vague and general, and therefore the worst; the second is better, because more special, *purple* being one species comprehended under *red;* the first is the best, because the most particular, pointing to that single tint of *purple* which is to be found in the *rose.* I acknowledge, at the same time, that this metaphorical epithet hath an excellence totally distinct from its vivacity. This I denominate its elegance. The object whence the metaphor is taken is a grateful object. It at once gratifies two of the senses, the nose by its fragrance, and the eye by its beauty. But of this quality I shall have occasion to treat afterwards.

I proceed at present in producing examples to confirm the theory advanced. And to show how much even an adverb that is very particular in its signification, may contribute to vivacity, I shall again have recourse to the Paradise Lost.

> Some say, he bid his angels turn *askance,*
> The poles of earth twice ten degrees and more,
> From the sun's axle———

If the poet, instead of saying *askance,* had said *aside,* which properly enough might have been said, the expression would have lost much of its energy. This adverb is of too general significa-

tion, and might have been used with equal propriety, if the plane of the ecliptic had been made perpendicular to that of the equator; whereas the word *askance*, in that case, could not have been employed, it denoting just such an obliquity in the inclination of these two planes as actually obtains. We have an example of the same kind in the description which Thomson gives us of the sun newly risen.

> ——Lo! now apparent all,
> *Aslant* the dewbright earth, and colour'd air,
> He looks in boundless majesty abroad *.

Further, it will sometimes have a considerable effect in enlivening the imagery, not only to particularise, but even to individuate the object presented to the mind. This conduct Dr Blair, in his very ingenious Dissertation on the poems of Ossian, observes to have been generally followed by his favourite bard. His similitudes bring to our view *the mist on the hill of Cromla, the storm on the sea of Malmor*, and *the reeds of the lake of Lego*. The same vivacious manner is often to be found in holy writ, *swift as a roe or as a fawn upon mount Bether* †, *white as the snow in Salmon* ‡, *fragrant as the smell of Lebanon* §. And in the passage lately quoted from the gospel, the introduction of the name of Solomon hath an admirable

* Summer. † Cant. ii. 17. ‡ Psal. lxviii. 14.
§ Hosea xiv. 6.

effect in invigorating the sentiment, not only as it points out an individual, but one of great fame in that country among the people whom our Saviour addressed; one besides, who was universally esteemed the wisest, the richest, and the most magnificent prince that ever reigned over Israel. Now this is a consideration which was particularly apposite to the design of the speaker.

It may indeed be imagined, that this manner can enliven the thought only to those who are acquainted with the individuals mentioned; but, on mature reflection, we may easily discover this to be a mistake. Not only do we, as it were, participate by sympathy, in the known vivid perceptions of the speaker or the writer; but the very notion we form of an *individual* thing known or unknown, from its being conceived as an individual, or as one thing is of a more fixed nature than that we form of a *species*, which is conceived to be equally applicable to several things, resembling indeed in some respects, though unlike in others: and for the same reason, the notion we have of a species is of a more steady nature than that we form of a *genus*, because this last is applicable to a still greater number of objects, amongst which the difference is greater and the resemblance less.

I mean not however to assert, that the method of individuating the object ought always to be

preferred by the poet or the orator. If it have its advantages, it hath its disadvantages also; and must be used sparingly by those who choose that their writings should be more extensively known than in their own neighbourhood. *Proper names* are not in the same respect essential to the language as *appellatives*. And even among the former, there is a difference between the names *known to fame*, and the names of persons or things comparatively *obscure*. The last kind of names will ever appear as strangers to the greater part of readers, even to those who are masters of the language. Sounds to which the ear is not accustomed, have a certain uncouthness in them, that renders them, when occurring frequently, fatiguing and disagreeable. But that nevertheless, when pertinently introduced, when neither the ear is tired by their frequency, nor the memory burdened by their number, they have a considerable effect in point of vivacity, is undeniable.

This holds especially when, from the nature of the subject, the introduction of them may be expected. Every one is sensible, for instance, that the most humorous or engaging story loseth egregiously, when the relater cannot or will not name the persons concerned in it. No doubt the naming of them has the greatest effect on those who are acquainted with them either personally or by character; but it hath some effect even on those who never heard of them before. It must be an

extraordinary tale indeed which we can bear for any time to hear; if the narrator proceeds in this languid train, "A certain person who shall be "nameless, on a certain occasion, said *so and so*, "to which a certain other person in the com- "pany, who likewise shall be nameless, made an- "swer."——Nay, so dull doth a narrative commonly appear wherein anonymous individuals only are concerned, that we choose to give feigned names to the persons rather than none at all. Nor is this device solely necessary for precluding the ambiguity of the pronouns, and saving the tediousness of circumlocution; for where neither ambiguity nor circumlocution would be the consequence, as where one man and one woman are all the interlocutors, this expedient is nevertheless of great utility. Do but call them any thing, the man suppose Theodosius, and the woman Constantia*, and by the illusion which the very appearance of names, though we know them to be fictitious, operates on the fancy, we shall conceive ourselves to be better acquainted

* The choice however is not quite arbitrary even in fictitious names. It is always injudicious to employ a name which, from its customary application, may introduce an idea unsuitable to the character it is affixed to. This error I think Lord Bollingbroke chargeable with in assigning the name *Damon* to his philosophical antagonist (Let. to M. de Pouilly). Though we read of a Pythagorean philosopher so called, yet in this country we are so much accustomed to meet with this name in pastorals and amorous songs, that it is impossible not to associate with it the notion of some plaintive shepherd or love-sick swain.

with the actors, and enter with more spirit into the detail of their adventures, than it will be possible for us to do, if you always speak of them in the indefinite, the general, and therefore the unaffecting style of *the gentleman* and *the lady*, or *he* and *she*. This manner, besides, hath an air of concealment, and is ever reminding us, that they are people we know nothing about.

It ariseth from the same principle that whatever tends to subject the thing spoken of to the notice of our senses, especially of our eyes, greatly enlivens the expression. In this way the demonstrative pronouns are often of considerable use. "I have coveted," says Paul to the elders of Ephesus, "no man's silver, or gold, or apparel; yea, ye yourselves know that *these* hands "have ministered to my necessities, and to them "that were with me*." Had he said, "*my* "hands," the sentence would have lost nothing either in meaning or in perspicuity, but very much in vivacity. The difference to hearers is obvious, as the former expression must have been accompanied with the emphatic action of holding up his hands to their view. To readers it is equally real, who in such a case instantaneously enter into the sentiments of hearers. In like manner, the English words *yon* and *yonder* are

* Acts xx. 33, 34.

more emphatical, because more demonstrative, than the pronoun *that*, and the adverb *there*. The two last do not necessarily imply that the object is in sight, which is implied in the two first. Accordingly, in these words of Milton,

———For proof look up,
And read thy fate in *yon* celestial sign *.——

the expression is more vivid than if it had been "*that* celestial sign." "Sit ye here," saith our Lord, "whilst I go and pray *yonder* †." The adverb *there* would not have been near so expressive ‡. Though we cannot say properly that pronouns or adverbs, either of place or of time, are susceptible of genera and species, yet we can say (which amounts to the same as to the effect), that some are more and some less limited in signification.

To the above remarks and examples on the subject of *specialty*, I shall only add, that in composition, particularly of the descriptive kind, it invariably succeeds best for brightening the image, to advance from general expressions to more special, and thence again to more particular. This, in the language of philosophy, is descending.

* Paradise Lost. † Matt. xxvi. 36.

‡ Le Clerc thus renders the original into French, "Asseyez-vous ici, "pendant que je m'en irai prier *là*." At the same time sensible how weakly the meaning is expressed by the adverb *là*, he subjoins in a note, "Dans "un lieu qu'il leur montroit du doit." The English version needs no such supplement.

We descend to particulars; but in the language of oratory it is ascending. A very beautiful climax will sometimes be constituted in this manner, the reverse will often have all the effect of an anticlimax. For an example of this order in description, take the following passage from the Song of Solomon: "My beloved spake and said "to me, Arise, my love, my fair, and come away; "for lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and "gone, the flowers appear on the earth, the time "of the singing of birds is come, and the voice "of the turtle is heard in our land, the fig-tree "putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with "the tender grape perfume the air. Arise, my "love, my fair, and come away*." The poet here, with admirable address, begins with mere negatives, observing the absence of every evil which might discourage his bride from hearkening to his importunate request; then he proceeds by a fine gradation to paint the most inviting circumstances that could serve to ensure the compliance of the fair. The first expression is the most general: "The winter is past." The next is more special, pointing to one considerable and very disagreeable attendant upon winter, *the rain*: "The "rain is over and gone." Thence he advanceth to the positive indications of the spring, as appearing in the effects produced upon the plants which clothe the fields, and on the winged inhabitants

* Chap. ii. 10, 11, 12, 13.

of the grove. "The flowers appear on the earth, "and the time of the singing of birds is come." But as though this were still too general, from mentioning birds and plants, he proceeds to specify *the turtle*, perhaps considered as the emblem of love and constancy; *the fig-tree* and *the vine*, as the earnest of friendship and festive joy, selecting that particular with regard to each, which most strongly marks the presence of the all-reviving spring. "The voice of the turtle is heard in our "land, the fig-tree putteth forth her green figs, "and the vines with the tender grape perfume "the air." The passage is not more remarkable for the liveliness, than for the elegance of the picture it exhibits. The examples are all taken from whatever can contribute to regale the senses and awaken love. Yet, reverse the order, and the beauty is almost totally effaced.

So much for that quality in proper terms which confers vivacity on the expression.

SECTION II.

Rhetorical tropes.

PART I.—*Preliminary observations concerning tropes.*

I COME now to enquire how far the judicious use of tropes is also conducive to the same end. It hath been common with rhetoricians to rank under the article of diction, not only all the tropes,

but even the greater part of the figures of eloquence, which they have uniformly considered as qualities or ornaments merely of elocution, and therefore as what ought to be explained among the properties of style. It is however certain, that some of them have a closer connection with the thought than with the expression, and by consequence fall not so naturally to be considered here. Thus all the kinds of comparison, as they imply a likeness in the *things*, and not in the *symbols*, belong properly to the thought. Nay, some comparisons, as was remarked above *, are not mere illustrations of a particular sentiment, but are also arguments from analogy in support of it. And if thus comparison holds more directly of thought than of language, the same may doubtless be said of all those other figures which I have already observed are but different modes of exhibiting a comparison.

It must be owned, however, that metaphor, though no other in effect than comparison in epitomé, hath at least as intimate a connection with the style as with the sentiment, and may therefore be considered under either head. That we may perceive the reason of this peculiarity, let it be observed, that there is a particular boldness in metaphor, which is not to be found in the same degree in any of the figures of rhetoric. With-

* Book I. Chap. VII. Sect. II. on engaging attention.

out any thing like an explicit comparison, and commonly without any warning or apology, the name of one thing is obtruded upon us, for the name of another quite different, though resembling in some quality. The consequence of this is, that as there is always in this trope an apparent at least, if it cannot be called a real, impropriety, and some degree of obscurity, a new metaphor is rarely to be risked. And as to ordinary metaphors, or those which have already received the public sanction, and which are commonly very numerous in every tongue, the metaphorical meaning comes to be as really ascertained by custom in the particular language, as the original, or what is called the literal, meaning of the word. And in this respect metaphors stand on the same foot of general use with proper terms.

What hath been now observed concerning metaphor, may with very little variation be affirmed of these three other tropes, synecdoché, metonymy, and antonomasia. These are near akin to the former, as they also imply the substitution of one word for another, when the things signified are related. The only difference among them is, that they respect different relations. In *metaphor* the sole relation is resemblance; in *synecdoché*, it is that which subsisteth between the species and the genus, between the part and the whole, and between the matter and the thing made from it; in *metonymy*, which is the most various of the tropes,

the relation is nevertheless always reducible to one or other of these three, causes, effects, or adjuncts; in *antonomasia*, it is nearly that of the individual to the species, or conversely. There is one trope *irony*, in which the relation is contrariety. But of this I shall have occasion to speak, when I come to consider that quality of style, which hath been named animation.

On a little attention it will be found to be a plain consequence of what hath been observed above, that though any similé, allegory, or prosopopeia is capable of being translated (and that even without losing any of its energy) from one tongue into another, a metaphor, a synecdoché, or a metonymy (for this holds more rarely of antonomasia) which is both significant and perspicuous in an original performance, is frequently incapable of being rendered otherwise than by a proper word. The corresponding metaphor, synecdoché, or metonymy, in another language will often be justly chargeable with obscurity and impropriety, perhaps even with absurdity. In support of this remark, let it be observed, that the noun *sail* in our tongue is frequently used, and by the same trope the noun *puppis* in Latin, to denote a ship. Let these synecdochés of a part for the whole, which are so very similar, be translated and transposed, and you will immediately perceive, that a man could not be said to speak Latin, who in that language should call a ship *velum*;

nor would you think that he spoke better English, who in our language should call it a *poop* *. These tropes therefore are of a mixed nature. At the same time that they bear a reference to the primitive signification, they derive from their customary application to the figurative sense, that is, in other words, from the use of the language, somewhat of the nature of proper terms.

In further confirmation of this truth, it may be remarked, that of two words even in the same language, which are synonymous, or nearly so, one will be used figuratively to denote an object, which it would be unsufferable to employ the other to denote, though naturally as fit for suggesting it. It hath been said, that "an excellent "*vein* of satire runs through the whole of Gulli-"ver's travels:" Substitute here *artery* in the room of *vein*, and you will render the sentence absolutely ridiculous. The two words *beast* and

* This doctrine might be illustrated by innumerable examples, if it were necessary. For an instance take that expression of Cicero, (Pro Legario) "Cujus latus ille mucro petebat?" Here we have a synecdoché in the word *mucro*, and a metaphor in the word *petebat*, neither of which can be suitably rendered into English. "Whose side did that point seek?" is a literal version, but quite intolerable. "Whom did you mean to assail with that "sword." Here the sense is exhibited, but as neither trope is rendered, much of the energy is lost. In like manner in the phrase "Vario Marte "pugnatum est," "They fought with various success;" there is a metonymy in the word *Marte*, which no translator into any modern language, who hath common sense, would attempt to transplant into his version. See Traité des Tropes, par M. du Marsais, Art. vii. iv.

brute, are often metaphorically applied to human creatures, but not in the same signification. The former denotes either a *blockhead* or a *voluptuary* of the grossest kind; the latter, one in the highest degree *unmannerly* and *ferocious*. Accordingly we speak of *beastly* ignorance; we say, "glut-"tony is a *beastly* vice;" but we should say, "his behaviour to those unhappy people was "quite *brutal*." The word *brutish*, however, though derived from the same root, is employed like *beastly*, to denote stupid or ignorant. Thus to say of any man, "He acted brutishly," and to say, "he acted brutally," are two very different things. The first implies, he acted *stupidly*; the second, he acted *cruelly* and *rudely*. If we recur to the nature of the things themselves, it will be impossible to assign a satisfactory reason for these differences of application. The usage of the language is therefore the only reason.

It is very remarkable that the usages in different languages are in this respect not only different, but even sometimes contrary; insomuch that the same trope will suggest opposite ideas in different tongues. No sort of metonymy is commoner amongst every people than that by which some parts of the body have been substituted to denote certain powers or affections of the mind, with which they are supposed to be connected. But as the opinions of one nation differ on this article

from those of another, the figurative sense in one tongue will by no means direct us to the figurative sense in another. The same may be said of different ages. A commentator on Persius has this curious remark, "Naturalists affirm, that "men laugh with the spleen, rage with the gall, "love with the liver, understand with the heart, "and boast with the lungs *." A modern may say with Sganarelle in the comedy, "It was so "formerly, but we have changed all that †." For so unlike are our notions, that the spleen is accounted the seat of melancholy and ill-humour. The word is accordingly often used to denote that temper; so that with us a splenetic man, and a laughing merry fellow, form two characters that are perfect contrasts to each other. The heart we consider as the seat not of the understanding, but of the affections and of courage. Formerly indeed we seem to have regarded the

* Cornutus on these words of the first satire, *Sum petulanti splene cachinno.* "Physici dicunt homines splene ridere, felle irasci, jecore "amare, corde sapere, et pulmone jactari." In the ancient piece called the Testaments of the twelve patriarchs, supposed to be the work of a christian of the first century, we find these words in the testament of Nephtali, for illustrating that God made all things good, adapting each to its proper use, Καρδίαν εἰς φρονεῖν, ἧπαρ πρὸς θυμόν, χολὴν πρὸς πικρίαν, εἰς γλῶτταν σπλῆνα, πρὸς τὰ παντοῖα. Grab. Spicil. patrum, 1. Sec. T. 1. Ed. 2. p. 212.

† "Cela etoit autrefois ainsi; mais nous avons changé tout cela." *Le medecin malgré lui. Molière.*

liver as the seat of courage; hence the term *milk-livered* for cowardly*.

One plain consequence of the doctrine on this head which I have been endeavouring to elucidate, is, that in every nation where from time to time there is an increase of knowledge, and an improvement in the arts, or where there often appear new works of genius in philosophy, history, or poetry, there will be in many words a transition more or less gradual, as that improvement is more or less rapid, from their being the figurative to their being the proper signs of certain ideas, and sometimes from their being the figurative signs of one, to their being the figurative signs of another idea. And this, by the way, discloseth to us one of the many sources of mutation to be found in every tongue. This transition will perhaps more frequently happen in

* From these things we may observe, by the way, how unsafe it is in translating, especially from an ancient language into a modern, to reckon that because the proper sense in two words of the different languages corresponds, the metaphorical sense of the same words will correspond also. In this last respect the words, as we have seen, may nevertheless be very different in signification, or even opposite. I think, in particular, that many translators of the Bible have been betrayed into blunders, through not sufficiently adverting to this circumstance. For instance, nothing at first appears to be a juster, as well as a more literal version of the Greek σκληροκαρδία, than the English *hard-hearted*. Yet I suspect, that the true meaning of the former term, both in the Septuagint and in the New Testament, is not *cruel*, as the English word imports, but *indocile*, *intractable*. The general remark might be illustrated by numberless examples, but this is not the place.

metaphor than in other tropes, inasmuch as the relation of resemblance is generally less striking, and therefore more ready to be overlooked, than those relations on which the others are founded. Yet that they too will sometimes be affected by it, we have no reason to question. That in those metonymies in particular, of which some instances have been given, wherein the connection may be justly accounted more imaginary than real, such changes in the application should arise, might naturally be expected. The transition from the figurative to the proper, in regard to such terms as are in daily use, is indeed inevitable. The word *vessel* in English hath doubtless been at first introduced by a synecdoché to signify a *ship*, the genus for the species, but is now become by use as much a proper term in the signification, as the word ship itself.

With regard to metaphor, it is certain, that in all languages there are many words which at first had one sense only, and afterwards acquired another by metaphorical application, of which words both senses are now become so current, that it would be difficult for any but an etymologist, to determine which is the original and which the metaphorical. Of this kind in the English tongue are the substantives, *conception*, *apprehension*, *expression*; the first of these *conception*, when it notes an action of the mind, and when the beginning of pregnancy in a female, is alike support-

ed by use; the second and third terms, *apprehension* for seizure, and *expression* for squeezing out, are now rather uncommon. Yet these are doubtless the primitive significations.

It may be further remarked, that in some words the metaphorical sense hath justled out the original sense altogether, so that in respect of it they are become obsolete. Of this kind in our tongue, are the verbs *to train, to curb, to edify, to enhance*, the primitive significations whereof were, *to draw, to bend, to build, to lift*. And if one should now speak of the *acuteness* of a razor, or of the *ardour* of a fire, we could not say that to a linguist he would speak unintelligibly, but by every man of sense he would be thought to express himself both pedantically and improperly. The word *ruminate*, though good in the metaphorical sense, to denote *musing* on a subject, would scarcely be admitted, except in poetry, in the literal sense, for *chewing the cud*. Thus it happens with languages as with countries; strangers received at first through charity, often in time grow strong enough to dispossess the natives.

Now in regard to all the words which fall under the two last remarks, whatever they were formerly, or in whatever light they may be considered by the grammarian and the lexicographer, they cannot be considered as genuine metaphors by the rhetorician. I have already assigned the reason. They have nothing of the effect

of metaphor upon the hearer. On the contrary, like proper terms, they suggest directly to his mind, without the intervention of any image, the ideas which the speaker proposed to convey by them.

From all that hath been said, it evidently follows, that those metaphors which hold mostly of the thought, that is, those to which the ear hath not been too much familiarised, have most of the peculiar vivacity resulting from this trope; the invariable effect of very frequent use being to convert the metaphorical into a proper meaning. A metaphor hath undoubtedly the strongest effect, when it is first ushered into the language; but by reason of its peculiar boldness, this, as was hinted already, is rarely to be hazarded, I may say it ought never to be hazarded, unless when both the perspicuity is secured to an ordinary understanding by the connection, and the resemblance suggested is very striking. A new metaphor (and the same holds, though in a lower degree, of every trope) is never regarded with indifference. If it be not a beauty, it is a blemish. Besides, the more a language advanceth in richness and precision, and the more a spirit of criticism prevails among those who speak it, the more delicate the people become in this respect, and the more averse to the admission of new metaphors. It is even proper it should be so, there not being the same plea of necessity in such languages, as in those

that are but poorly supplied with words. Hence it is that in modern times, the privilege of coining these tropes is almost confined to poets and orators; and as to the latter, they can hardly ever be said to have this indulgence, unless when they are wrought up to a kind of enthusiasm by their subject. Hence also have arisen those qualifying phrases in discourse, which, though so common in Greek and Latin, as well as in modern languages, are rarely, if ever, to be met with either in the rudest or in the most ancient tongues. These are, *so to speak, if I may thus express myself*, and the like.

I cannot help remarking, before I conclude this article of the origin of tropes, and of the changes they undergo, through the gradual operation of custom, that critics ought to show more reserve and modesty than they commonly do, in pronouncing either on the fitness or on the beauty of such as occur sometimes in ancient authors. For first, it ought to be observed, (as may be collected from what has been shown above) that the less enlightened a nation is, their language will of necessity the more abound in tropes, and the people will be the less shy of admitting those which have but a remote connection with the things they are employed to denote. Again, it ought to be considered that many words which must appear as tropical to a learner of a distant age, who acquires the lan-

guage by the help of grammars and dictionaries, may, through the imperceptible influence of use, have totally lost that appearance to the natives, who considered them purely as proper terms. A stranger will be apt to mistake a grammatical for a rhetorical trope, or even an accidental homonymy for a far-fetched figure. Lastly, it ought to be remembered, how much the whole of this matter is every where under the dominion of caprice, and how little the figurative part of the language of any people, is susceptible of a literal translation, that will be accounted tolerable, into the language of any other. If these things were properly attended to, I imagine we should, on these subjects, be more diffident of our own judgment, and consequently less captious and decisive.

So much for the nature of tropes in general, and those universal principles on which in every tongue their efficacy depends; and so much for the distinction naturally consequent on those principles into grammatical tropes and tropes rhetorical.

PART II.—*The different sorts of tropes conducive to vivacity.*

I now consider severally the particular ways wherein rhetorical tropes may be rendered subservient to vivacity.

1. *The less for the more general.*

The first way I shall mention is, when, by means of the trope, a species is aptly represented by an individual, or a genus by a species. I begin with this, because it comes nearest that specialty in the use of proper terms, from which, as was evinced already, their vivacity chiefly results. Of the individual for the species I shall give an example from our celebrated satirist Mr Pope:

> May some choice patron bless each grey goose quill!
> May every Bavius have his Bufo still*!

Here, by a beautiful antonomasia, Bavius, a proper name, is made to represent one whole class of men, Bufo, also a proper name (it matters not whether real or fictitious), is made to represent another class. By the former is meant every bad poet, by the latter every rich fool who gives his patronage to such. As what precedes in the Essay secures the perspicuity, (and in introducing tropes of this kind, especially new ones, it is necessary that the perspicuity be thus secured) it was impossible in another manner to express the sentiment with equal vivacity.

There is also a sort of antonomasia to which use hath long ago given her sanction, and which therefore needs not be introduced with much precaution.

* Prologue to the Satires.

Such is the following application of famous names; a Solomon for a wise man, a Crœsus for a rich man, a Judas for a traitor, a Demosthenes for an orator, and a Homer for a poet. Nor do these want a share of vivacity, when apposite and properly managed.

That kind of synecdoché by which the species is put for the genus, is used but sparingly in our language. Examples however occur sometimes, as when an assassin is termed a *cut-throat*, or a fiction a *lie*, as in these words of Dryden:

> The cock and fox the fool and knave imply,
> The truth is moral, tho' the tale a *lie*.

In like manner, slaughter, especially in battle, is by poets sometimes denominated *murder*, and legal prosecution, *persecution*. Often in these instances the word may justly be said to be used without a figure. It may, however, in general, be affirmed of all those terms, that they are more vivid and forcible, for this single reason, because they are more special.

There is one species of the *onomatopeia*, which very much resembles the *antonomasia* just now taken notice of. It is when a verb is formed from a proper name, in order to express some particular action, for which the person to whom the name belonged was remarkable. An example of this we have in the instructions which Hamlet gave the players who were to act his piece

before the king and queen. He mentioned his having seen some actors who in their way outheroded Herod, intimating, that by the outrageous gestures they used in the representation, they over-acted even the fury and violence of that tyrant. This trope hath been admirably imitated by Swift, who says concerning Blackmore, the author of a translation of some of the psalms into English verse,

Sternhold himself he out-sternholded.

How languid in comparison of this would it have been to say, that in Sternhold's own manner Sir Richard outdid him. But it must be owned, that this trope, the *onomatopeia*, in any form whatever, hath little scope in our tongue, and is hardly admissible except in burlesque.

2. *The most interesting circumstance distinguished.*

The second way I shall take notice of, wherein the use of tropes may conduce to vivacity, is when the trope tends to fix the attention on that particular of the subject which is most interesting, or on which the action related, or fact referred to, immediately depends. This bears a resemblance to the former method; for by that an individual serves to exhibit a species, and a species a genus; by this a part is made to represent the whole, the abstract, as logicians term it, to suggest the concrete, the passion its object, the operation its subject, the instru-

ment the agent, and the gift the giver. The tropes which contribute in this way to invigorate the expression, are these two, the synecdoché and the metonymy.

For an illustration of this in the synecdoché, let it be observed, that by this trope, the word *hand* is sometimes used for man, especially one employed in manual labour. Now in such expressions as the following,

All *hands* employ'd, the royal work grows warm *;

it is obvious, from the principles above explained, that the trope contributes to vivacity, and could not be with equal advantage supplied by a proper term. But in such phrases as these, "One of the hands "fell over-board:" "All our hands were asleep," it is ridiculous, as what is affirmed hath no particular relation to the part specified. The application of tropes in this undistinguishing manner, is what principally characterizes the contemptible cant of particular professions. I shall give another example. A *sail* with us frequently denotes a *ship*. Now to say, "We descried a *sail* at a dis-"tance," hath more vivacity than to say, "We des-"cried a *ship*," because in fact the sail is that part which is first discovered by the eye; but to say "our sails ploughed the main," instead of "our "ships ploughed the main," would justly be accounted nonsensical, because what is metaphori-

* Dryden.

cally termed *ploughing the main* is the immediate action of the keel, a very different part of the vessel. To produce but one other instance, the word *roof* is emphatically put for house in the following quotation:

> Return to her? and fifty men dismiss'd?
> No; rather I abjure all *roofs*, and choose
> To be a comrade with the wolf and owl,
> To wage against the enmity o' th' air,
> Necessity's sharp pinch *———

The notion of a house as a shelter from the inclemencies of the sky, alluded to in these lines, directly leads the imagination to form a more vivid idea of that part of the building which is over our heads †.

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* Shakespeare's Lear.

† The latin example quoted from Tully in a note on the first part of this Section, affords a good illustration of this doctrine. "Cujus latus ille *mucro* petebat?" Mucro for gladius, the point for the weapon, is in this place particularly apposite. From the point the danger immediately proceeds; to it therefore, in any assault, the eye both of the assailant and of the assailed, are naturally directed; of the one that he may guide it aright, and of the other that he may avoid it. Consequently on it the imagination will fix, as on that particular which is the most interesting, because on it the event directly depends: and wherever the expression thus happily assists the fancy, by coinciding with its natural bent, the sentiment is exhibited with vivacity. We may remark by the way, that the specifying of the part aimed at, by saying *Cujus latus*, and not simply *quem*, makes the expression still more graphical. Yet *latus* here is no trope, else it had been *Quod latus*, not *Cujus latus*. But that we may conceive the difference between such a proper use of tropes, as is here exemplified, and such an injudicious use as noway tends to enliven the expression, let us suppose the orator had intended to say, "he held a sword in his hand." If instead of the

It was observed, that the metonymy also contributes in this way to vivacity. It doth so by substituting the instrument for the agent, by employing the abstract to represent the concrete, or by naming the passion for its object, the gift for the giver, the operation for the subject. Of the first sort, the instances are very common; as when we say of a poem, that it is the production of an elegant *pen*, instead of an elegant writer. In the same way *pencil* is sometimes used for painter. It must be owned, that the triteness of such expressions considerably lessens their value, and that for a reason explained in the preceding part of this Section. It is however certain, that what vivacity can justly be ascribed to them, ariseth purely from the principle which hath just now been illustrated in the synecdoché; namely, a coincidence in the expression with the bent of the imagination, both pointing to that particular with which the subject spoken of is immediately connected. Nay, so close is the relation between this species of the metonymy, and that of the synecdoché above exemplified, that the same expression may sometimes be con-

proper word he had employed the *synecdoché*, and said "*mucronem* manu "tenebat," he would have spoken absurdly, and counteracted the bent of the fancy, which in this instance leads the attention to the hilt of the sword, not to the point.

sidered indifferently as belonging to either trope. Thus in the quotation brought from Dryden, "All *hands* employed," it is of no consequence whether we denominate the word *hands* one or other, a part for the whole, or the instrument for the agent.

The second species of metonymy mentioned, the abstract for the concrete, occurs much seldomer, but hath also in the same way a very good effect. Isaac Bickerstaff, in his lucubrations, acquaints us with a visit which an eminent rake and his companions made to a Protestant nunnery erected in England by some ladies of rank. "When he entered," says the author, "upon see-"ing a servant coming towards him, with a de-"sign to tell him, this was no place for them, "up goes my grave *Impudence* to the maid*." Every body must perceive, that the expression would have been incomparably fainter, if he had said, "Up goes my grave *impudent fellow* to the "maid." The reason is obvious, an *impudent fellow* means one who, amongst other qualities, has that of impudence; whereas, by personifying the abstract, you leave no room for thinking of any other quality; the attention is entirely fixed on that to which the action related is imputable, and thus the natural tendency of the fancy is humoured by the expression.

* Tatler, No. 32.

The last species of this trope I took notice of, if that can be called one species which is so various in its appearances, presenting us sometimes with the passion instead of its object, sometimes with the operation instead of its subject, and sometimes with the gift instead of the giver, is in very frequent use. By this trope the Almighty hath been styled "the *terror* of the oppressor, "and the *refuge* of the oppressed;" which, though the same in sense, is more emphatical than "the object of terror to the oppressor, and the "giver of refuge to the oppressed." "The Lord "is my *song*," says Moses, "he is become my "*salvation* *," that is, the subject of my song, the author of my salvation. Dryden makes Lord Shaftesbury style the Duke of Monmouth

> The people's *prayer*, the glad diviner's theme,
> The young men's *vision*, and the old men's *dream* †.

Here the terms *prayer*, *vision*, *dream*, (for the word theme is literal) are used each for its respective subject. Nothing is more natural or more common amongst all nations, the simplest as well as the most refined, than to substitute the passion for its object. Such tropes as these, my *love*, my *joy*, my *delight*, my *aversion*, my *horror*, for that which excites the emotion, are to be found in every language. Holy writ abounds in them; and they are not seldom to be met with

* Exod. xv. 2. † Absalom and Achitophel.

in the poems of Ossian. "The *sigh* of her se-" cret soul," is a fine metonymy of this kind to express the youth for whom she sighs in secret. As the vivacity of the expression in such quotations needs no illustration to persons of taste; that the cause of this vivacity ariseth from the coincidence of the expression with the bent of the imagination, fixing on the most interesting particular, needs no eviction to persons of judgment.

3. *Things sensible for things intelligible.*

A third way wherein tropes may be rendered subservient to vivacity, is when things intelligible are represented by things sensible. There is no truth more evident than that the imagination is more strongly affected by what is perceived by the senses, than by what is conceived by the understanding. If therefore my subject be of things only conceivable, it will conduce to enliven the style, that the tropes which I employ, when I find it convenient to employ tropes, exhibit to the fancy things perceivable.

I shall illustrate this doctrine first in metaphors. A metaphor, if apposite, hath always some degree of vivacity, from the bare exhibition of likeness, even though the literal and the figurative senses of the word belong to the same class of objects; I mean only in this respect the same, that they be both sensible or both intelligible. Thus a *blunder*

in the administration of public affairs, hath been termed a *solecism* in politics, both things intelligible. Again, when the word *sails* is employed to denote the wings of a fowl, or conversely, when the word *wings* is adopted to signify the sails of a ship, both objects are of the same class, as both are things sensible; yet these metaphors have a considerable share of vivacity, by reason of the striking resemblance, both in the appearance of the things signified, and in their use. The last, however, is the best, for a reason which will be given in the next remark. But in general it may be asserted, that in the representation of things sensible, there is less occasion for this trope: Accordingly this application of it is now almost entirely left to the poets. On the contrary, if we critically examine any language, ancient or modern, and trace its several terms and phrases to their source, we shall find it hold invariably, that all the words made use of, to denote spiritual and intellectual things, are in their origin metaphors, taken from the objects of sense. This shows evidently, that the latter have made the earliest impressions, have by consequence first obtained names in every tongue, and are still, as it were, more present with us, and strike the imagination more forcibly than the former.

It may be said, that if this observation be true, it is to no purpose to mention, as a method of en-

livening the diction, the representing of intelligible things by sensible images, since it is impossible by language to represent them otherwise. To this I answer, that the words of which I am speaking, I call metaphors in their origin; notwithstanding which, they may be at present, agreeably to what was formerly observed, proper terms. When speaking of tropes in general, it was remarked, that many words, which to a grammatical eye appear metaphors, are in the rhetorician's estimate no metaphors at all. The ground of this difference is, that the grammarian and the rhetorician try the words by very different tests. The touch-stone of the former is etymology, that of the latter is present use. The former peruseth a page, and perhaps finds not in the whole ten words that are not metaphorical; the latter examines the same page, and doth not discover in it a single metaphor. What critic, for example, would ever think of applying this appellation to terms such as these, *spirit*, *evidence*, *understanding*, *reflection*? Or what etymologist would not acknowledge, that to this trope solely these terms had owed their birth?

But I proceed to give examples of vivacity, by true rhetorical metaphors, wherein things sensible are brought to signify things intelligible. Of this the following is one from Pope:

> At length Erasmus, that great injur'd name,
> (The glory of the priesthood, and the shame!)

Stemm'd the wild *torrent* of a barbarous age,
And drove those holy Vandals off the stage.

Here the almost irresistible influence of general manners, which is an object purely of the understanding, is very appositely and vivaciously represented by a *torrent*, an object both of the sight and of the feeling. By the same vivid kind of metaphor, *light* is used for knowledge, *bridle* for restraint; we speak of *burning* with zeal, being *inflamed* with anger, and having a *rooted* prejudice.

But metaphor is not the only trope which can in this way confer vivacity, metonymy frequently in a similar manner promotes the same end. One very common species of the metonymy is, when the badge is put for the office, and this invariably exhibits a sensible in lieu of an intelligible object. Thus we say the *mitre* for the priesthood, the *crown* for the royalty; for the military occupation we say, the *sword*, and for the literary professions, those especially of theology, law, and physic, the common expression is the *gown*. Often also in those metonymies wherein the cause is put for the effect, and contrariwise, in those wherein the effect is put for the cause, we have the same thing exemplified, a sensible object presented to the mind instead of an intelligible. Of the former the cause for the effect, the following lines of Dryden may serve as an illustration;

'Tis all thy business, business how to shun,
To bask thy naked body in the *sun* *.

Though the rhime had permitted the change, the word *sun-shine* instead of sun, would have rendered the expression weaker. The luminary itself is not only a nobler and distincter, but a more immediate object to the imagination than its effulgence, which though in some respect sensible as well as the other, is in some respect merely intelligible, it not being perceived directly no more than the air, but discovered by reflection from the things which it enlightens. Accordingly we ascribe to it neither magnitude nor figure, and scarce with propriety even colour. As an exemplification of the latter, the effect or something consequential for the cause, or at least the implement for the motive of using it, these words of scripture will serve, "the *sword* without, and terror within †," where the term sword, which presents a particular and perceivable image to the fancy, must be more picturesque than the word *war*, which conveys an idea that is vague and only conceivable, not being otherwise sensible but by its consequences.

4. *Things animate for things lifeless.*

A fourth way in which tropes may promote vivacity, is when things sensitive are presented to

* Dryden's Persius. † Deut. xxxii. 25.

the fancy instead of things lifeless; or, which is nearly the same, when life, perception, activity, design, passion, or any property of sentient beings, is by means of the trope attributed to things inanimate. It is not more evident that the imagination is more strongly affected by things sensible than by things intelligible, than it is evident that things animate awaken greater attention, and make a stronger impression on the mind, than things senseless. It is for this reason that the quality of which I am treating, hath come to be termed vivacity, or liveliness of style.

In exemplifying what hath been now advanced, I shall proceed in the method which I took in the former article, and begin with metaphor. By a metaphor of this kind, a literary performance hath been styled the *offspring* of the brain; by it a state or government in its first stage is represented as a child in these lines of Dryden,

> When empire in its *childhood* first appears,
> A watchful fate o'ersees its tender years *.

In the two last examples we have things lifeless exhibited by things animate. In the following, wherein the effect is much the same, sense, feeling, and affection, are ascribed metaphorically to inanimate matter. Thomson, describing the influence of the sun-beams upon the snow in the valley, thus vividly and beautifully expresseth himself,

* Almanzor.

———Perhaps the vale,
Relents a while to the reflected ray *.

" Every hedge," says the Tatler, " was *conscious* " of more than what the representations of ena- " moured swains admit of †." Who sees not how much of their energy these quotations owe to the two words *relents* and *conscious?* I shall only add, that it is the same kind of metaphor which hath brought into use such expressions as the following: a *happy* period, a *learned* age, the *thirsty* ground, a *melancholy* disaster.

There are several sorts of the metonymy which answer the same purpose. The first I shall mention, is that wherein the inventor is made to denote the invention, *Ceres*, for instance, do denote bread, *Bacchus* wine, *Mars* war, or any of the pagan deities to denote that in which he is specially interested, as *Neptune* the sea, *Pluto* hell, *Pallas* wisdom, and *Venus* the amorous affection. It must be owned, that as this kind seems even by the ancients to have been confined to the discoveries, attributes, or dominions ascribed in their mythology to the gods, it is of little or no use to us moderns ‡.

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* Winter. † Tatler, No. 1.

‡ Even when such tropes occur in ancient authors, they can scarcely be translated into any modern tongue, as was hinted on Part First in regard to the phrase " Vario *Marte* pugnatum est." Another example of the same thing, " Sine Cerere et *Baccho* friget *Venus*."

Another tribe of metonymies, which exhibits things living for things lifeless, is when the possessor is substituted for his possessions. Of this we have an example in the gospel: "Wo unto "you, scribes and pharisees, hypocrites, for ye "devour the *families* of widows."——Here the word *families* is used for their means of subsistence*. Like to this is an expression in Balaam's prophecy concerning Israel: "He shall eat up the *nations* his enemies †."

A third tribe of metonymies which often presents us with animate instead of inanimate objects, is when the concrete is made to signify the abstract; as *the fool* used for folly, *the knave* for knavery, *the philosopher* for philosophy. I shall illustrate this by some examples. Dryden hath given us one of this kind that is truly excellent.

> The slavering cudden propt upon his staff,
> Stood ready gaping with a grinning laugh,
> To welcome her awake, nor durst begin
> To speak, but wisely kept *the fool* within ‡

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* Matt. xxiii. 14. The noun οἰκίας may be rendered either *families* or *houses*. The last, though used by our translators, hath here a double disadvantage. First, it is a trope formed upon a trope (which rarely hath a good effect), the *house* for the family, the thing containing for the thing contained, and the *family* for their means of living; secondly, ideas are introduced which are incompatible. There is nothing improper in speaking of a person or family being devoured, but to talk of devouring a house is absurd. It may be destroyed, demolished, undermined, but not devoured.

† Deut. xxiv. 8. ‡ Cymon and Iphigenia.

The whole picture is striking. The proper words, every one of them, are remarkably graphical as well as the metonymy, with which the passage concludes. Another from the same hand,

> Who follow next a double danger bring,
> Not only hating David but *the king* *.

As David himself was king, both the proper name, and the appellative would point to the same object, were they to be literally interpreted. But the opposition here exhibited manifestly shows, that the last term, *the king*, is employed by metonymy to denote the royalty. The sense therefore is, that they have not only a personal hatred to the man that is king, but a detestation of the kingly office. A trope of this kind ought never to be introduced, but when the contrast, as in the present example, or something in the expression, effectually removes all obscurity and danger of mistake. In the passage last quoted, there is an evident imitation of a saying recorded by historians, of Alexander the Great, concerning two of his courtiers, Craterus and Hephestion: "Craterus," said he, "loves *the king*, but Hephestion "loves *Alexander*." Grotius hath also copied the same mode of expression, in a remark which he hath made, perhaps with more ingenuity than truth, on the two Apostles, Peter and John. The attachment of John, he observes, was to

* Absalom and Achitophel.

to *Jesus*, of Peter to *the Messiah* *. Accordingly their master gave the latter the charge of his church, the former that of his family, recommending to him in particular the care of Mary his mother. The following sentiment of Swift is somewhat similar:

> I do the most that friendship can;
> I hate *the viceroy*, love the man.

The viceroy for the viceroyalty. I shall only add two examples more in this way: the first is from Addison, who, speaking of Tallard when taken prisoner by the allies, says,

> An English muse is touch'd with generous woe,
> And in th' unhappy man forgets *the foe* †.

The foe, that is, his state of hostility with regard to us at the time: for the second I shall again recur to Dryden,

> A tyrant's power in rigour is exprest,
> *The father* yearns in the true prince's breast.

The father to denote fatherly affection, or the disposition of a father. In fine, it may justly be affirmed of this whole class of tropes, that as metaphor in general hath been termed an allegory in epitomé, such metaphors and metonymies as present us with things animate in the room of things lifeless, are prosopopeias in miniature.

* Annotations in Johan. Intr. † Campaign.

But it will be proper here to obviate an objection against the last mentioned species of metonymy, an objection which seems to arise from what hath been advanced above. Is it possible, may one say, that the concrete put for the abstract should render the expression livelier, and that the abstract put for the concrete should do the same? Is it not more natural to conclude, that if one of these tropes serve to invigorate the style, the reverse must doubtless serve to flatten it? But this apparent inconsistency will vanish on a nearer inspection. It ought to be remembered, that the cases are comparatively few in which either trope will answer better than the proper term, and the few which suit the one method, and the few which suit the other, are totally different in their nature. To affirm that in one identical case, methods quite opposite would produce the same effect, might, with some appearance of reason, be charged with inconsistency; but that in cases not identical, nor even similar, contrary methods might be necessary for effecting the same purpose, is nowise inconsistent. But possibly the objector will argue on the principles themselves severally considered, from which, according to the doctrine now explained, the efficacy of the tropes ariseth: "If," says he, "the abstract for the concrete confers vivacity on the expression, by "concentrating the whole attention on that par-"ticular with which the subject is most intimate-

" ly connected, doth it not lose as much on the " other hand, by presenting us with a quality in- " stead of a person, an intelligible for a sensible, " an inanimate for a living object?" If this were the effect, the objection would be unanswerable. But it is so far otherwise, that in all such instances, by ascribing life, motion, human affections, and actions, to the abstract, it is in fact personified, and thus gains in point of energy the one way, without losing any thing the other. The same thing holds of all the congenial tropes, the dole for the donor, and the rest. In like manner, when the concrete is used for the abstract, there is, in the first place, a real personification, the subject being in fact a mere quality both inanimate and insensible: nor do we lose the particularity implied in the abstract, because, where this trope is judiciously used, there must be something in the sentence, which fixes the attention specially on that quality. Thus, to recur to the preceding examples, when David and the king, though known to be the same person, are contra-distinguished in the same line, the mind is laid under a necessity of considering the word *king* as implying purely that which constitutes him such, namely, the royal power. The same may be said of the other instances. So far indeed I agree with the objector, that wherever the trope is not distinctly marked by the words with which it is connected, it is faulty and injudicious. It both

misses vivacity, and throws obscurity on the sentiment.

I have here examined the tropes so far only as they are subservient to vivacity, by presenting to the mind some image, which, from the original principles of our nature, more strongly attaches the fancy than could have been done by the proper terms whose place they occupy. And in this examination I have found, that they produce this effect in these four cases: first, when they can aptly represent a species by an individual, or a genus by a species; secondly, when they serve to fix the attention on the most interesting particular, or that with which the subject is most intimately connected; thirdly, when they exhibit things intelligible by things sensible; and fourthly, when they suggest things lifeless by things animate. How conducive the tropes are in like manner both to elegance and to animation, will be examined afterwards. They even sometimes conduce to vivacity, not from any thing preferable in the ideas conveyed by them, but in a way that cannot properly come under consideration, till we inquire how far this quality depends on the number of the words, and on their arrangement.

PART III.—*The use of those tropes which are obstructive to vivacity.*

Let us now, ere we finish this article, bestow

some attention on the opposite side (for contraries serve best to illustrate each other), and make a few remarks on those tropes which either have a natural tendency to render the expression more languid, or at least are noway fitted for enlivening the diction. That there are tropes whose direct tendency is even to enfeeble the expression, is certainly true, though they are fewer in number, and more rarely used, than those which produce the contrary effect. The principal tropes of this kind which I remember at present, are three sorts of the synecdoché, the genus for the species, the whole for a part, and the matter for the instrument or thing made of it, and some sorts of the metaphor, as the intelligible for the sensible. Of the genus for the species, which is the commonest of all, *vessel* for ship, *creature* or *animal* for man, will serve as examples. Of the whole for a part, which is the most uncommon, I do not recollect another instance but that of the man or woman by name, sometimes for the body only, sometimes only for the soul; as when we say, "such a one was buried yesterday," that is, "the body of such a one was buried yesterday." "Æneas saw his father in Elysium," that is, his father's ghost. The common phrase "all the "world," for a great number of people, and some others of the same kind, have also been produced as examples, but improperly; for in all such expressions there is an evident hyperbole, the inten-

tion being manifestly to magnify the number. Of the third kind, the matter for what is made of it, there are doubtless several instances, such as *silver* for money, *canvass* for sail, and *steel* for sword.

It is proper to inquire from what principles in our nature, tropes of this sort derive their origin, and what are the purposes which they are intended to promote. The answer to the first of these queries will serve effectually to answer both. First then, they may arise merely from a disposition to vary the expression, and prevent the too frequent recurrence of the same sound upon the ear. Hence often the genus for the species. This is the more pardonable, if used moderately, as there is not even an apparent impropriety in putting at any time the genus for the species, because the latter is always comprehended in the former; whereas, in the reverse, there is inevitably an appearance of impropriety, till it is mollified by use. If one is speaking of a linnet, and sometimes instead of *linnet* says *bird*, he is considered rather as varying the expression, than as employing a trope. Secondly, they may arise from an inclination to suggest contempt without rudeness; that is, not openly to express, but indirectly to insinuate it. Thus, when a particular man is called a creature or an animal, there is a sort of tacit refusal of the specific attributes of human nature, as the term implies only the direct acknowledgment of those

enjoyed in common with the brutes, or even with the whole creation. The phrases *no creature*, and *every creature*, like *all the world*, are a kind of hyberbolic idioms, which come not under this category. Thirdly, they may proceed from a love of brevity in cases wherein perspicuity cannot be hurt. Thus to say,

Your friend Alexander lies here interr'd,

is briefer, and not less perspicuous, than to say, "The corpes of your friend Alexander"——Fourthly, they may spring from a desire to find a term that will make a better counterpart, in respect either of the sense or of the sound, to some other word which the speaker or the writer hath had occasion to use, the ideas conveyed by the two words being also related. This occasions sometimes not only that the genus is used for the species, but that the matter is made to signify the thing made of it; both of which will be further illustrated when I come to consider how far vivacity may result from arrangement. Fifthly (and this is the last source that occurs to my thoughts), tropes of this kind may arise from a desire of palliating the representation, and that either from humanity, from courtesy, or from decency.

By the first of the five principles above mentioned, if used discreetly, something is done for the sake of variety, where the vivacity of the expression is little affected; by the second, even a farther end, a species of animation, is attained; by the third and fourth, what is lost of vivacity in

one way is more than compensated in another; but by the fifth, we are led to avoid this quality as a fault.

There are some subjects of which it may be necessary on certain occasions to speak, which, nevertheless, present an object to the imagination that is either disagreeable or indecent. It is sufficient that such things be hinted to the understanding, so that the meaning may be apprehended, it is by no means fit that they be painted in the liveliest colours to the fancy. There are some things which a painter may find it expedient to introduce into a picture, and to render just discoverable, by placing them in the shade, in the back-ground, or at a corner, which it would be extremely improper to set in such a point of view as would immediately attract and fix the eye of the spectator. The like doubtless holds with regard to the orator. And it hath been chiefly to veil without darkening what the smallest degree of delicacy requires us to avoid exposing in the strongest light, that certain sorts of tropes and modes of expression have first been brought into use. To the same cause is also to be ascribed, the recourse that is often had to circumlocution, which will fall to be considered in the ensuing chapter.

All such tropes and modes of expression have come under the common denomination of the *euphemism*, a name that hath been assigned purely from the consideration of the purpose for which

they are employed; which is to express in terms that are inoffensive, an object in some respect or other offensive. The euphemism is not a distinct trope (as it hath improperly been accounted by some critics), but a certain application of other tropes, especially of metaphor and synecdoché, and even of some of the figures of elocution, the periphrasis in particular. Sometimes we are led to this from a principle of civility, or even of affection, when the plain and direct mention of an object might either recal grief, or hurt sensibility; and sometimes from ideas of decorum.

It is by an euphemism that the words *deceased* and *departed* came at first to be used instead of *dead*, which is no other than a synecdoché of the genus for the species; *falling asleep* for *dying*, which is a metaphor, there being an evident resemblance between sleep and death, and *stopping payment* for *becoming bankrupt*, which is a metonymy of the effect for the cause. There is indeed, in employing this figure, the euphemism, more than in any other, a natural tendency to change. The reason may easily be deduced from the general doctrine concerning tropes, explained in the first part of this section. The frequent use of any word in this manner, brings it insensibly to have all the effect of the proper term whose place it was intended to supply: no sooner is this effect produced by it, than the same principle that influenced us at first to employ it, operates with equal

strength in influencing us to lay it aside, and in its stead to adopt something newer and still more remote. The excessive delicacy of the French in this respect hath given rise to expressions which it would not be easy to trace, from any known trope or figure of oratory, and which, to say the truth, have something ridiculous in their appearance. Thus a *disbanded* regiment is with them a *reformed* regiment; a *cashiered* officer is a *reformed* officer, and a man is said to *reform* his equipage, when necessity obliges him to give it up; even the hangman, through the superabundance of their complaisance, is titled *the master of the high works* *. In the use of this figure among the ancients, superstition in regard to some words which were thought to be of bad omen, seems to have had as great a share, as either a delicate sympathy with the feelings of others, or a very nice sense of what is decent and cleanly.

As to the nature and extent of the last source which was assigned of the euphemism, it will be proper to be a little more particular. Those things which it is indecent to express vividly, are always such as are conceived to have some turpitude in them, either natural or moral. An example of this decency in expression, where the subject hath some natural turpitude, you will find in Martha's answer, as it is in the original, when

* Les maitre des hautes œuvres.

our Saviour gave orders to remove the stone from the sepulchre of her brother Lazarus, " Lord, by " this time he *smelleth*, for he hath been dead four " days*." In our version it is somewhat indelicately, not to say indecently, rendered *stinketh*. Our translators have in this instance unnecessarily receded from their ordinary rule of keeping as close as possible to the letter. The synecdoché in this place answers just as well in English as in Greek: the perspicuity is such as secures the reader from the possibility of a mistake, at the same time that the expression is free from the indecency with which the other is chargeable. But if it be necessary to avoid a vivid exhibition of what appears uncleanly to the external senses, it is much more necessary in whatever may have a tendency to pollute the mind. It is not always the mention of vice as such, which has this tendency. Many of the most atrocious crimes may be mentioned with great plainness, without any such danger, and therefore without the smallest indecorum. What the subjects are which are in this way dangerous, it is surely needless to explain. And as every person of sense will readily conceive the truth of the general sentiment, to propose without necessity to produce examples for the elucidation of it, might justly be charged with being a breach of that decency of which I am treating.

* John xi. 39. ὄζει.

So much for the use that may be made of tropes in softening and even enervating, as well as in enlivening and invigorating the expression; though it must be owned that the occasions are comparatively few, on which the former purpose can be said to be expedient.

I shall only add a few remarks concerning the *catachresis*, which hath in like manner been improperly reckoned a separate trope. The reason that I have taken no notice of it hitherto, is, that it is but rarely defensible in modern languages, which require the strictest regard to propriety. And even in the few cases wherein it is defensible, it is purely so because necessary; but is seldom eligible, as it rarely contributes either to ornament or to strength. I shall explain myself by some instances.

One species of the catachresis, is when words are used in a signification, that is very near their ordinary meaning, but not precisely the same. Examples of this would be a *high* man for a *tall* man, a *large* oration for a *long* oration, a *big* genius for a *great* genius. This, if any thing, would be classed under the metaphor, as there is a resemblance in the import of the words. Unluckily the word adopted is too near a coincidence with the right epithet, to present an image to the fancy, at the same time that it is not entirely coincident, and therefore cannot be denominated a proper term. In this application the name *catachresis* is no more than another word for im-

propriety. Of this kind there is an example in the fifth commandment, as it runs in our version, "that thy days may be *long* (anglicè *many*) upon "the land *."——It is impossible to avoid such blunders in translating, when one aims at being literal, without attending to the different geniuses of different tongues. In original performances they are more rarely to be met with, being just such improprieties as none but novices in the language are apt to fall into.

A second species of this figure is when words which, from their etymology, appear to be applicable solely to one kind of thing, come afterwards to be applied to another, which is nearly related in its nature or design, but with which, nevertheless, the analysis of the word will not accord. This is sometimes not only excusable from necessity, as when the language doth not furnish a proper term, but sometimes also receives the sanction of general use. And in this case, whatever it was originally, it becomes proper. I shall give some examples of this in our own tongue. As it is probable, that amongst our Saxon ancestors, candleholders were solely made of wood, they were properly denominated *candlesticks;* afterwards, when, through an increase of wealth and luxury, such utensils were made of metal, the old name was nevertheless retained, and at first by a

* Exod. xx.

catachresis applied to these. But the application is now ratified, and the word appropriated by custom. The name *inkhorn*, denoting a portable case for holding *ink*, probably at first made only of *horn*, is a similar instance. In like manner the word *parricide* in English, like *parricida* in Latin, at first perhaps signified only the murderer of his father, but hath come to be equally applied to him who murders his mother, his brother, or his sister. In all these instances there was an excuse at first from necessity, the language not affording words strictly proper. But now having obtained the universal suffrage, which in every country gives law to language, they need no excuse. There is an instance of a catachresis of this kind in our translation of the Bible, which (not being supported by the plea of necessity) ought to be considered as a glaring impropriety: "He made the "laver of brass, and the foot of it of brass, of the "*looking-glasses* of the women *."—It is however probable that the word *mirrour* was not in such common use then as it is now. There are a few phrases which come under the same denomination, and which, though favoured by custom, being quite unnecessary, deserve to be exploded. Such, amongst others, are the following: the *workmanship* of God, for the work of God; a *man of war*, for *a ship of war*; and a *merchantman*, for a trad-

* Exod. xxxviii. 8.

ing vessel. The absurdity in the last two instances is commonly augmented by the words connected in the sequel, in which, by the application of the pronouns *she* and *her*, we are made to understand that the man spoken of is a female. I think this gibberish ought to be left entirely to mariners; amongst whom, I suppose, it hath originated.

The only remaining species of the catachresis, which I can recollect at present, is no other than a far-fetched and incongruous metaphor. Nothing can more justly be reduced under this class, than the application of the attributes of one corporeal sense to the objects of another; as if we should say of a voice, that it is *beautiful* to the ear; or of a face, that it is *melodious* to the eye. Nothing succeeds better, as hath been observed already, than metaphors taken from the objects of sensation, to denote the objects of pure intellection; yet nothing generally succeeds worse than metaphors that are only transferred from sense to sense. I say *generally*, because such is the omnipotence of fashion, in respect of language, that it is capable of conciliating us even to such applications. Thus the term *sweet* belongs properly to the sense of tasting alone; yet it hath been transferred to the senses of smelling, of hearing, and of seeing. We say a *sweet* scent, *sweet* melody, a *sweet* prospect. The word *soft* in like manner belonged originally to the sense of touching,

and to it only. Yet it hath been applied metaphorically, and (as we learn by the event) successfully to other senses. Thus we talk of a *soft* whisper, and Pope speaks of the *soft-eyed* virgin. Customary applications at length become proper, though they do not exhibit the primitive sense. For this reason, several of the aforesaid instances are not to be considered at present as examples of the *catachresis*. Sometimes, however, even a new catachresis of the last mentioned kind, which is the most hazardous, will please the most fastidious critic. Take the following example from Young,

Her voice is but the *shadow* of a sound *.

The reason of our approbation in this case, is, if I mistake not, that an illusion or comparison is suggested which exhibits more strongly the author's meaning, than it could have been exhibited by any other words in the same compass. The sentiment is, that the same relation which the shadow bears to the substance of which it is the shadow, the lady's voice bears to an ordinary sound.

Having now discussed what was proposed here concerning tropes, I shall conclude with observing, that in this discussion, there hath been occasion,

* Universal Passion.

as it were, incidentally to discover,—that they are so far from being the inventions of art, that, on the contrary, they result from the original and essential principles of the human mind;—that accordingly they are the same *upon the main*, in all nations, barbarous and civilized;—that the simplest and most ancient tongues do most abound with them, the natural effect of improvement in science and language, which commonly go together, being to regulate the fancy, and to restrain the passions;—that the sole business of art in this subject, is to range the several tropes and figures into classes, to distinguish them by names, and to trace the principles in the mind which gave them birth.

The first, indeed, or rather the only people upon the earth, who have thought of classing under proper appellations, the numerous tropes and figures of elocution, common to all languages, were the Greeks. The Latins, and all modern nations, have, in this particular, only borrowed from them, adopting the very names they used. But as to the tracing of those figures to the springs in human nature from which they flow, extremely little hath as yet been attempted. Nay, the names that have been given are but few, and by consequence very generical. Each class, the metaphor and the metonomy in particular, is capable of being divided into se-

veral tribes, to which no names have yet been assigned.

It was affirmed that the tropes and figures of eloquence are found to be the same *upon the main* in all ages and nations. The words *upon the main* were added, because though the most and the principal of them are entirely the same, there are a few which presuppose a certain refinement of thought, not natural to a rude and illiterate people. Such in particular is that species of the metonomy, the concrete for the abstract, and possibly some others. We shall afterwards perhaps have occasion to remark, that the modern improvements in ridicule have given rise to some which cannot properly be ranged under any of the classes above mentioned; to which, therefore, no name hath as yet been appropriated, and of which I am not sure whether antiquity can furnish us with an example.

Section III.

Words considered as sounds.

When I entered on the consideration of vivacity as depending on the choice of words, I observed that the words may be either proper terms, or rhetorical tropes; and whether the one or the other, they may be regarded not only as signs but as sounds, and consequently as capable in certain

cases of bearing, in some degree, a natural resemblance or affinity to the things signified. The two first articles, proper terms and rhetorical tropes, I have discussed already, regarding only the sense and application of the words, whether used literally or figuratively. It remains now to consider them in regard to the sound, and the affinity to the subject of which the sound is susceptible. When, as Pope expresseth it, "the sound "is made an echo to the sense*," there is added in a certain degree, to the association arising from custom, the influence of resemblance between the signs and the things signified; and this doubtless tends to strengthen the impression made by the discourse. This subject, I acknowledge, hath been very much canvassed by critics; I shall therefore be the briefer in my remarks, confining myself chiefly to the two following points. First, I shall enquire what kinds of things language is capable of imitating by its sound, and in what degree it is capable; secondly, what rank ought to be assigned to this species of excellence, and in what cases it ought to be attempted.

PART I.—*What are articulate sounds capable of imitating, and in what degree.*

First, I shall enquire what kinds of things language is capable of imitating by its sound, and in what degree it is capable.

* Essay on Criticism.

And here it is natural to think, that the imitative power of language must be greatest, when the subject itself is things audible. One sound may surely have a greater resemblance to another sound, than it can have to any thing of a different nature. In the description therefore of the terrible thunder, whirlwind and tempest, or of the cooling zephyr and the gentle gale, or of any other thing that is sonorous, the imitation that may be made by the sound of the description will certainly be more perfect, than can well be expected in what concerns things purely intelligible, or visible, or tangible. Yet even here the resemblance, if we consider it abstractly, is very faint.

The human voice is doubtless capable of imitating, to a considerable degree of exactness, almost any sound whatever. But our present inquiry is solely about what may be imitated by articulate sounds, for articulation greatly confines the natural powers of the voice; neither do we inquire what an extraordinary pronunciation may effectuate, but what power in this respect the letters of the alphabet have, when combined into syllables, and these into words, and these again into sentences, uttered audibly indeed and distinctly, but without any uncommon effort. Nay, the orator in this species of imitation, is still more limited. He is not at liberty to select whatever articulate sounds he can find to be fittest for imitating those concerning which he is discours-

ing. That he may be understood, he is under a necessity of confining himself to such sounds as are rendered by use the signs of the things he would suggest by them. If there be a variety of these signs, which commonly cannot be great, he hath some scope for selection, but not otherwise. Yet so remote is the resemblance here at best, that in no language, ancient or modern, are the meanings of any words, except perhaps those expressing the cries of some animals, discoverable, on the bare hearing, to one who doth not understand the language.

Indeed, when the subject is articulate sound, the speaker or the writer may do more than produce a resemblance, he may even render the expression an example of that which he affirms. Of this kind precisely are the three last lines of the following quotation from Pope:

> These equal syllables alone require,
> Tho' oft the ear the open vowels tire,
> While expletives their feeble aid *do* join,
> *And ten low words oft creep in one dull line* *.

But this manner, which, it must be owned, hath a very good effect in enlivening the expression, is not imitation, though it hath sometimes been mistaken for it, or rather confounded with it.

* Essay on Criticism.

As to sounds inarticulate, a proper imitation of them hath been attempted in the same piece, in the subsequent lines, and with tolerable success, at least in the concluding couplet:

> Soft is the strain when Zephyr gently blows,
> And the smooth stream in smoother numbers flows;
> But when loud surges lash the sounding shore,
> The hoarse rough verse should like the torrent roar *.

An attempt of the same kind of conformity of the sound to the sense, is perhaps but too discernible in the following quotation from the same author:

> O'er all the dreary coasts!
> Dreadful gleams,
> Dismal screams,
> Fires that glow,
> Shrieks of woe,
> Sullen moans,
> Hollow groans,
> And cries of injured ghosts †.

Milton's description of the opening of hell-gates ought not here to be overlooked.

> ———On a sudden open fly
> With impetuous recoil and jarring sound,
> Th' infernal doors, and on their hinges grate
> Harsh thunder ——— ‡.

The same author has, in another performance, given an excellent specimen in this way,

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* Essay on Criticism. † Ode on St Cecilia's Day.
‡ Paradise Lost, B. II.

Grate on their scrannel pipes of wretched straw *.

He succeeds the better here, that what he says is evidently accompanied with a design of exciting contempt. This induceth us to make allowance for his leaving the beaten road in search of epithets. In this passage of the Odyssey,

———His bloody hand
Snatch'd two unhappy of my martial band;
And dash'd like dogs against the stony floor †;

the sound, but not the abruptness of the crash, is, I imagine, better imitated than in the original, which, on account of both, especially the last, was much admired by the critic of Halicarnassus. An excellent attempt in this way we have in a poem of Dyer:

———The Pilgrim oft
At dead of night mid his oraison hears
Aghast the voice of time, disparting towers,
Tumbling all precipitate down-dash'd,
Rattling around, loud thundering to the moon ‡.

But the best example to be found in our language is, in my opinion, the following lines of Mr Pope,

* Lycidas. An imitation of a line of Virgil, Ecl. 3.
Stridenti miserum stipula disperdere carmen.

† Pope's Od. In Homer thus,
Συν δε δυω μαςψας, ωςε σκυλακας; προτι γαιη
Κοπτ'.———

‡ Ruins of Rome, Dodsley's Collection, vol. 1.

What! like Sir Richard, rumbling, rough and fierce,
With arms, and George, and Brunswic croud the verse,
Rend with tremendous sounds your ears asunder?
With gun, drum, trumpet, blunderbuss, and thunder?
Then all your muse's softer art display,
Let Carolina smoothe the tuneful lay,
Lull with Amelia's liquid name the nine,
And sweetly flow through all the royal line*.

The success here is the greater that the author appears through the whole to deride the immoderate affectation of this over-rated beauty, with which some modern poetasters are so completely dazzled. On the whole, the specimens produced, though perhaps as good as any of the kind extant in our language, serve to evince rather how little than how much can be done in this way, and how great scope there is here for the fancy to influence the judgment.

But there are other subjects beside sound, to which language is capable of bearing some resemblance. Time and motion, for example, or whatever can admit the epithets of quick and slow, is capable in some degree of being imitated by speech. In language there are long and short syllables, one of the former being equal or nearly equal to two of the latter. As these may be variously combined in a sentence, and syllables of either kind may be made more or less to predominate, the sentence

* Sat. I.

may be rendered by the sound, more or less expressive of celerity or tardiness. And though even here the power of speech seems to be much limited, there being but two degrees in syllables, whereas the natural degrees of quickness or slowness in motion or action may be infinitely varied, yet on this subject the imitative power of articulate sound seems to be greater and more distinctive than on any other. This appears to particular advantage in verse, when, without violating the rules of prosody, a greater or a less number of syllables is made to suit the time. Take the following example from Milton,

When the merry bells ring round,
And the jocund rebecs sound

Tŏ mānў ă yŏuth ănd mānў ă māid
Dancing in the checker'd shade *.

In this passage the third line, though consisting of ten syllables, is, by means of two anapests, pronounced, without hurting the measure, in the same time with an iambic line of eight syllables, and therefore well adapted in sound to the airy diversion he is describing. At the same time it must be owned, that some languages have in this particular a remarkable superiority over others. In English the iambic verse, which is the commonest, admits here and there the insertion of a spondee, for protracting, or of an anapest, as

* L'allegro.

in the example quoted, for quickening the expression *.

But, in my opinion, Greek and Latin have here an advantage, at least in their heroic measure, over all modern tongues. Accordingly Homer and Virgil furnish us with some excellent specimens in this way. But that we may know what our own tongue and metre is capable of effecting, let us recur to our own poets, and first of all to the celebrated translator of the Grecian bard. I have made choice of him the rather as he was perfectly sensible of this beauty in the original, which he copied, and endeavoured, as much as the materials he had to work upon would permit him, to exhibit it in his version. Let us take for an example the punishment of Sisyphus in the other world, a passage which had on this very account been much admired in Homer by all the critics both ancient and modern.

Up the high hill he heaves a huge round stone;
The huge round stone resulting with a bound,
Thunders impetuous down, and smoaks along the ground †.

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* Perhaps the feet employed in ancient poetry, are not in strict propriety applicable to the measures adopted by the English prosody. It is not my business at present to enter into this curious question. It suffices that I think there is a rhythmus in our verse plainly discernible by the ear, and which, as it at least bears some analogy to the Greek and Latin feet, makes this application of their names sufficiently intelligible.

† In Greek thus,

——————— Λααν ανω ωθεσκε ποτι γοφον ———
Αυτις επειτα πεδονδε κυλινδετο λαας αναιδης. Od.

It is remarkable that Homer (though greatly preferable to his translator in both) hath succeeded best in describing the fall of the stone, Pope, in relating how it was heaved up the hill. The success of the English poet here is not to be ascribed entirely to the length of the syllables, but partly to another cause, to be explained afterwards.

I own I do not approve the expedient which this admirable versifier hath used, of introducing an Alexandrine line for expressing rapidity. I entirely agree with Johnson *, that this kind of measure is rather stately than swift; yet our poet hath assigned this last quality as the reason of his choice. "I was too sensible," says he in the margin, "of the beauty of this, not to endeavour to imitate it, though unsuccessfully. "I have, therefore, thrown it into the swiftness

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In Latin verse, Vida, in his Art of Poetry, hath well exemplified this beauty, from his great master Virgil.

Ille autem membris, ac mole ignavius ingens
Incedit tardo molimine subsidendo.

Here not only the frequency of the spondees, but the difficulty of forming the elisions; above all, the spondee in the fifth foot of the second line instead of a dactyl, greatly retard the motion. For the contrary expression of speed,

Si se forte cava extulerit mala vipera terra,
Tolle moras, cape saxa manu, cape robora, pastor,
Ferte citi flammas, date tela, repellite pestem.

Here every thing concurs to accelerate the motion; the number of dactyls, no elision, no diphthong, no concurrence of consonants, unless where a long syllable is necessary, and even there the consonants of easy pronunciation.

* Rambler, No. 92.

"of an Alexandrine, to make it of a more pro-
"portionable number of syllables with the Greek."
Ay, but to resemble in length is one thing, and to resemble in swiftness is another. The difference lies here: In Greek, an hexameter verse, whereof all the feet save one are dactyls, though it hath several syllables more, is pronounced in the same time with an hexameter verse, whereof all the feet save one are spondees, and is, therefore, a just emblem of velocity; that is, of moving a great way in a short time. Whereas the Alexandrine line, as it consists of more syllables than the common English heroic, requires proportionably more time to the pronunciation. For this reason, the same author, in another work, has, I think, with better success, made choice of this very measure, to exhibit slowness:

A needless Alexandrine ends the song,
That, like a wounded snake, drags its slow length along *.

It deserves our notice, that in this couplet he seems to give it as his opinion of the Alexandrine, that it is a dull and tardy measure. Yet, as if there were no end of his inconsistency on this subject, he introduceth a line of the same kind a little after in the same piece, to represent uncommon speed:

Not so when swift Camilla scours the plain,
Flies o'er th' unbending corn, and skims along the main †.

* Essay on Criticism. † Ibid.

A most wonderful and peculiar felicity in this measure to be alike adapted to imitate the opposite qualities of swiftness and slowness. Such contradictions would almost tempt one to suspect, that this species of resemblance is imaginary altogether. Indeed, the fitness of the Alexandrine to express, in a certain degree, the last of these qualities, may be allowed, and is easily accounted for. But no one would ever have dreamt of its fitness for the first, who had not been misled by an erroneous conclusion from the effect of a very different measure, Greek and Latin hexameter. Yet Pope is not the only one of our poets who hath fallen into this error. Dryden had preceded him in it, and even gone much farther. Not satisfied with the Alexandrine, he hath chosen a line of fourteen syllables, for expressing uncommon celerity:

> Which urg'd, and labour'd, and forc'd up with pain,
> Recoils, and rowls impetuous down, and smoaks along the plain *.

Pope seems to have thought that in this instance, though the principle on which Dryden proceeded was good, he had exceeded all reasonable bounds in applying it; for it is this very line which he hath curtailed into an Alexandrine in the passage from the Odyssey already quoted. Indeed, the impropriety here is not solely in the measure, but also in the diphthongs *oi*, and *ow*, and *oa*, so frequently recurring, than which nothing, not even

* Lucretius, B. III.

a collision of jarring consonants, is less fitted to express speed. The only word in the line that seems adapted to the poet's view is the term *impetuous*, in which two short syllables, being crowded into the time of one, have an effect similar to that produced by the dactyl in Greek and Latin. Creech, without the aid of an Alexandrine, hath been equally, if not more unsuccessful. The same line of the Latin poet he thus translates,

And with swift force roll thro' the humble plain:

Here the sentiment, instead of being imitated, is contrasted by the expression. A more crawling spondaic verse our heroic measure hardly ever admits.

At the same time, in justice to English prosody, it ought to be remarked, that it compriseth one kind of metre, the anapestic, which is very fit for expressing celerity, perhaps as much as any kind of measure, ancient or modern. But there is in it a light familiarity, which is so ill adapted to the majesty of the iambic, as to render it but rarely admissible into poems written in this measure, and, consequently, either into tragedy or into epic.

Ere I conclude what may be said on the subject of motion, I shall observe farther, that there are other affections of motion beside swiftness and slowness, such as vibration, intermission, inequality, which, to a certain degree, may be imitated in the sound of the description. The expression

Troy's turrets totter'd——

in the translation of the Iliad, is an instance of the first, the vibration being represented by the frequent and quick recurrence of the same letters ranged a little differently. In the line

Tumbling all precipitate down dash'd,

already quoted from the Ruins of Rome, there is an attempt to imitate the motion as well as the sound. The last of the four following lines from Milton contains also a tolerable imitation of both:

Oft on a plat of rising ground
I hear the far-off curfew sound,
Over some wide-water'd shore,
Swinging slow with sullen roar *.

Another very natural subject of imitation is size, or whatever the terms great or little may be applied to, literally or metaphorically. Things grand may be imitated by long and well-sounding words, things bulky by long and ill-sounding words, things little by short words. The connection here is as obvious as in either of the two former cases; but the power of our language is rather less. It affords so little variety in the choice of words in respect of length, that often the grandest objects in nature cannot be expressed with propriety, otherwise than by a poor monosyllable. Bulkiness, accompanied with motion, will fall to be exemplified in the next article.

A fourth subject of imitation in language is difficulty and ease. There is a considerable difference in this respect in the pronunciation of different

* Il Penseroso.

words and sentences, which, if happily accommodated to the sentiment, adds to the effect of the expression. If, for instance, what is difficultly acted be difficultly pronounced, and if, on the contrary, what is performed with facility be uttered with ease, there will result a certain degree of vivacity from this slight resemblance. For it is an invariable maxim, that the ear is grated with hearing what the organs of speech find it uneasy to articulate. Several things contribute to render pronunciation difficult. First, the collision of vowels; that is, when one syllable ends with a vowel, and the next (it matters not whether it be in the same word or not) begins with the same vowel, or with one which approaches to it in sound. Re-enter, co-operate, re-inforce, re-animate, tho' oft, the ear, the open, are examples of this. A certain effort is required to keep them as it were asunder, and make both be distinctly heard as belonging to different syllables. When the vowels are very unlike in sound, or the formation of the one is easily accomplished after the articulation of the other, they have not the same effect. Thus, in the words variety, coeval, the collision doth not create a perceptible difficulty. Now, as difficulty is generally the cause of slowness in any operation, such a clashing of vowels is often employed to represent a tardy or lingering motion*.

* It is chiefly from this cause that the line in the Odyssey above quoted is so expressive of both. Λααν ανω ωθεσκε——

A second cause of difficulty in utterance, is the frequent recurring of the aspirate (h), especially when placed between two vowels that are both sounded. It is this which renders the translation of the passage above quoted from the Odyssey so significant of the same qualities.

Up the high hill he heaves a huge round stone.

A like effect is produced by any of the mutes that are aspirated, as the *th* and *ph*, or *f*, especially if combined with other consonants. The following line of Chaucer is not a bad example of this:

He through the thickest of the throng gan threke *.

A third cause of difficulty in pronunciation is the clash of two or more jarring consonants. Some consonants are easily combined; the combinations of such are not expressive of this quality, but it is not so with all. An instance of this difficulty we have in the following line:

And strains from hard bound brains six lines a-year †.

We have here once five consonants, sometimes four, and sometimes three, which are all pronounced without an intervening vowel. The difficulty is rendered still more sensible by the double pause, which occasions a very drawling move-

* Knight's Tale.

† Pope, Fragment of a Satire.

ment. Another example I shall take from the same author:

> When Ajax strives some rock's vast weight to throw,
> The line too labours, and the words move slow *.

In the first of these lines, the harsh combinations of consonants make the difficulty of pronunciation very observable; in the second, the author hath not been so successful. I know not how it might affect the more delicate ear of an Italian, but if we compare it with the generality of English verses, we shall find it remarkably easy and flowing. It is nothing in respect of sound, either in the syllables separately, or in the measure, that in the least favours the sentiment, except only in its ending in a spondee, instead of an iambus. But this is too common in our poesy to have any effect that is worthy of notice. Vida's translator, in a passage extremely similar, hath been happier, if he may not be thought to have exceeded in this respect:

> If some large weight his huge arm strive to shove,
> The verse too labours, the throng'd words scarce move †.

First, the word *verse* is harsher than *line*; secondly, the ending is in two spondees, which, though perhaps admissible into the iambic measure, is very rare, and hath for that reason a more considerable effect. A fourth cause of difficulty in the pronunciation, is the want of harmony in the

* Essay on Criticism. † Pitt.

numbers. This is frequently an effect of some of the fore-mentioned causes, and may be illustrated by some of the examples already quoted. In the following passage from Milton, one of the most unharmonious in the book, hugeness of size, slowness and difficulty of motion, are at once aptly imitated:

> ————Part, huge of bulk!
> Wallowing, unwieldy, enormous in their gait,
> Tempest the ocean *————.

An illustration of tardiness, difficulty, and hesitancy through fear, the same author hath also given us in the ill-compacted lines which follow:

> He came,[4] and with him Eve,[4] more loth,[1] tho' first
> To offend, discountenanc'd both, and discompos'd †.

Several of the foregoing causes concur in the following couplet,

> So he with difficulty, and labour hard,
> Mov'd on, with difficulty and labour he ‡.

A fifth cause of difficulty, the last I shall take notice of, is when there is a frequent recurrence of the same letters or syllables, especially where the measure requires a quick pronunciation, because then there is the greatest risk of mistake and confusion §.

* Paradise Lost, B. VII. † Ibid. B. X. ‡ Ibid. B. II.

§ An excellent example of this kind we have from the Iliad,

Πολλα δ' ανάντα, κατάντα, παράντα τε δοχμια τ' ηλθον.

This recurrence is the happier here, as it is peculiarly descriptive of rugged ways and jolting motion.

I shall just mention another subject of imitation by sound, which is very general, and may be said to comprehend every thing not included in those above mentioned. The agreeable in things may be adumbrated to us by smooth and pleasant sounds, the disagreeable by such as are harsh and grating. Here, it must be owned, the resemblance can be but very remote, yet even here it will sometimes serve to enliven the expression.

Indeed the power of numbers, or of a series of accordant sounds, is much more expressive than that of single sounds. Accordingly, in poetry we are furnished with the best examples in all the kinds; and as the writer of odes hath in this respect a much greater latitude than any other kind of versifier, and at pleasure may vary his measure with his subject, I shall take a few illustrations from our lyric poets. All sorts of English verse, it hath been justly remarked, are reducible to three, the iambic, the trochaic, and the anapestic. In the first of these, the even syllables are accented, as some choose to express it, or as others, the even syllables are long; in the second, it is on the odd syllables that the accent rests; in the third, two unaccented syllables are followed by one accented. The nearer the verses of the several kinds are to perfection, the more exactly they correspond with the definitions just now given; though each kind admits deviations to a certain degree, and in long poems

even requires them for the sake of variety. The iambus is expressive of dignity and grandeur; the trochee, on the contrary, according to Aristotle *, is frolicsome and gay. It were difficult to assign a reason of this difference, that would be satisfactory; but of the thing itself, I imagine, most people will be sensible on comparing the two kinds together. I know not whether it will be admitted as a sufficient reason, that the distinction into metrical feet hath a much greater influence in poetry on the rise and the fall of the voice, than the distinction into words; and if so, when the cadences happen mostly after the long syllables, the verse will naturally have an air of greater gravity, than when they happen mostly after the short. An example of the different effects of these two measures, we have in the following lines of an admired modern, whose death lately afforded a just subject of lamentation to every good man, as well as to every friend of the muses.

Thee the voice, the dance obey,
Temper'd to thy warbled lay.
O'er Idalia's velvet green
The rosy crowned loves are seen
On Cytherea's day,
With antic sports, and blue ey'd pleasures,
Frisking light in frolic measures;
Now pursuing, now retreating,
Now in circling troops they meet;

* Rhet. Lib. III.

To brisk notes in cadence beating,
Glance their many-twinkling feet.
Slow melting strains their queen's approach declare:
Where'er she turns, the Graces homage pay.
With arms sublime, that float upon the air,
In gliding state she wins her easy way:
O'er her warm cheek and rising bosom move
The bloom of young desire, and purple light of love *.

The expression of majesty and grace in the movement of the six last lines is wonderfully enhanced by the light and airy measure of the lines that introduce them.—The anapest is capable, according as it is applied, of two effects extremely different; first, it is expressive of ease and familiarity, and accordingly is often used with success both in familiar epistles and in pastoral. The other effect is an expression of hurry, confusion, and precipitation. These two, however different, may be thus accounted for. The first is a consequence of its resemblance to the style of conversation: there are so many particles in our language, such as monosyllabic pronouns, prepositions, conjunctions, and articles, on which the accent never rests, that the short syllables are greatly supernumerary. One consequence of this is, that common chat is with greater ease, as I imagine, reduced to this measure, than to any other. The second consequence ariseth purely from its rapidity compared with other measures. This effect it is especially fitted to produce, when

* Gray's Progress of Poesy.

it is contrasted with the gravity of the iambic measure, as may be done in the ode; and when the style is a little elevated, so as to be sufficiently distinguished from the style of conversation. All these kinds have been employed with success in the Alexander's Feast, an ode that hath been as much celebrated as perhaps any in our language, and from which I propose to produce some illustrations. The poet, on recognizing Jove as the father of his hero, hath used the most regular and perfect iambics——

The list'ning crówd admíre the lófty sóund,
A présent déity' they shóut aróund,
A présent déity' the váulted róofs rebóund.
With rávish'd éars
The mónarch héars,
Assúmes the gód,
Affécts to nód,
And séems to sháke the sphéres.

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But when he comes to sing the jovial god of wine, he very judiciously changes the measure into the brisk trochaic.

Bácchus ever fáir and yóung,
Drinking jóys did first ordáin.
Bácchus' blessings áre a tréasure,
Drinking is the sóldier's pléasure.
Rich the tréasure,
Swéet the pléasure,
Swéet is pléasure áfter páin.

Again, when he describes his hero as wrought up to madness, and setting fire to the city in a fit of

revenge, he with great propriety exhibits this phrenzy in rapid anapests, the effect of which is set off the more strongly by their having a few iambic lines interspersed.

Revénge, revénge, Timótheus críes,
See the fúries arise!
See the snákes that they réar,
How they híss in their háir,
And the spárkles that flásh from their ey'es!——
Behóld how they tóss their tórches on hígh,
How they point to the Pérsian abódes
And glittering témples of their hóstile gód.
The princes applaúd with a fúrious jóy;
And the king seiz'd a flámbeau with zeal to destroy——

So much for the power of numbers. It may not be amiss now, ere I conclude this topic, to make a few cursory remarks on the imitative powers of the several letters which are the elements of all articulate sounds. And first, soft and delicate sounds are mostly occasioned by an equal mixture of consonants with short and monophthong vowels; the consonants being chiefly those denominated liquids, *l*, *m*, *n*, *r*, and those among the mutes called slender, *p*, *t*, *k*, or *c* and *ch* when they sound as *k*; to these add *v*, also *z*, and *s*, when they sound as in the two words *Zion* and *Asia*. In like manner the duplication of a consonant sounds more delicately than the combination of different consonants. Thus *ammiro* is softer than *admiro*, *fatto* than *facto*, *atto* than *apto*, and *disse* than *dixe*. Secondly, strong

and loud sounds are better exhibited by diphthongs and long vowels, those of the mutes called middle, and which comparatively may be termed *hard*, *b*, *d*, *g* in both its sounds, and *j*; especially when these are combined with liquids which render them more sonorous, without occasioning harshness, as in the words, *bombard*, *thunder*, *clangour*, *bludgeon*, *grumble*. Thirdly, to roughness the letter *h* contributes as well as the gutturals. Such is the Greek *χ*, to which there is no corresponding sound in English, though there is in Spanish and in German; also those of the mutes called aspirates, as *f*, or *ph*, and *th*, in both its sounds *, the double *r*, and all uncouth combinations. Fourthly, to sharp and cutting sounds the following letters best contribute, *s* when it sounds as in *mass*, *c* when it has the same sound, *ch* when it sounds as in *chide*, *x*, *sh* and *wh*; from the abounding of which letters and combinations amongst us, foreigners are apt to remark I know not what appearance of whistling or hissing in our conversation. Indeed, the word *whistle* is one whose sound is as expressive of the signification, as perhaps any other word whatever. Fifthly, obscure and tinkling sounds are best expressed by the nazals, *ng* and *nk*, as in *ringing*, *swinging*, *twanging*, *sinking*; by the *sn*, as in *snuffle*, *sneeze*, *snort*; and even by the *n* simply when it follows another liquid or a mute,

* Of these one occurs in the noun *breath*, the other in the verb *breathe*. The first is the roughest.

and when the vowel (if there be a vowel interposed between it and the preceding consonant) is not very audibly pronounced, as in *morn, horn, sullen, fallen, bounden, gotten, beholden, holpen.*— This sound formerly much abounded in English. It was not only the termination of many of the participles, but also of most plurals both of nouns and of verbs. As a plural termination, if we except a very few nouns, we may say it is now entirely banished, and very much, perhaps too much, disused in participles. The sound is unmusical, and consequently when too frequent, offensive, but may nevertheless have a good effect when used sparingly. Besides, it would be convenient, especially in verse, that we could oftener distinguish the preterite from the participle, than our language permits.

Now, of the five sorts of sound above explained, it may be remarked by the way, that the first is characteristic of the Italian, the second of the Spanish, the third of the Dutch, and perhaps of most of the Teutonic dialects; the fourth of the English, and the fifth of the French, whose final *m* and *n*, when not followed by a vowel, and whose terminations, *ent* and *ant*, are much more nazal than the *ng* and *nk* of the English. I suspect too, both from their prosody and from their pronunciation, that of all the languages above mentioned, the French is the least capable of that kind of imitation of which I have been

speaking. On the other hand, I think, but in this opinion I am not confident, that of all those languages the English is, on the whole, the most capable. There is perhaps no particular excellence of sound in which it is not outdone by one or other of them; the Italian hath doubtless more sweetness, the Spanish more majesty, the German perhaps more bluster: but none of them is in this respect so various as the English, and can equal it in all the qualities.

So much for the properties in things that are susceptible of a kind of imitation by language, and the degree in which they are susceptible.

PART II.—*In what esteem ought this kind of imitation to be held, and when ought it to be attempted?*

It remains now to consider what rank ought to be assigned to this species of beauty, and in what cases it ought to be attempted.

As to the first of these inquiries, from what hath been already said it appears very plain, that the resemblance or analogy which the sound can be made in any case to bear to the sense, is at best, when we consider the matter abstractly, but very remote. Often a beauty of this kind is more the creature of the reader's fancy, than the effect of the writer's ingenuity.

Another observation, which will assist us in determining this question is, that when the other properties of elocution are attained, the absence of this kind of imagery, if I may express it by so strong a term, occasions no defect at all. We never miss it We never think of it. Whereas an ambiguous, obscure, improper, languid, or inelegant expression, is quickly discovered by a person of knowledge and taste, and pronounced to be a blemish. Nor is this species of resemblance to be considered as on the same footing with those superior excellencies, the want of which, by reason of their uncommonness, is never censured as a fault, but which, when present, give rise to the highest admiration. On the contrary, not the absence only, but even the attainment of this resemblance, as far as it is attainable, runs more risk of passing unheeded than any other species of beauty in the style. I ought however to except from this, the imitation produced by the different kinds of measure in poetry, which, I acknowledge, is sufficiently observable, and hath a much stronger effect than any other whereof language alone is susceptible. The reason why in other cases it may so readily pass unnoticed, is, that even the richest and most diversified language hath very little power, as hath been shown a'ready, in this particular. It is therefore evident, that if the merit of every kind of rhetorical excellence is to be ascertained by the effect, and I know of no other

standard, to this species we can only assign with justice the very lowest rank. It ought consequently ever to give place to the other virtues and ornaments of elocution, and not they to it.

As to the other question, In what cases it may be proper to aim at the similitude in sound of which I have been treating; those cases will appear to one who attentively considers what hath been already advanced on the subject, to be comparatively few. Hardly any compositions in prose, unless those whose end is to persuade, and which aim at a certain vehemence in style and sentiment, give access to exemplify this resemblance. And even in poetry it is only the most pathetic passages, and the descriptive parts, to which the beauty whereof I am speaking seems naturally adapted. The critical style, the argumentative, and the didactic, by no means suit it. Yet it may be said, that some of the examples above quoted for the illustration of this subject, are taken from writings of the kind last mentioned, from Pope on Criticism, and Vida on Poesy. But it must be observed, that the authors, in the passages alluded to, are discoursing on this very subject. An exemplification was therefore necessary in them, in order to convey to their readers a distinct idea of what they meant to recommend.

I must further observe, that, even in those poems wherein this kind of resemblance is most

suitable, it is only in a few passages, when something more striking than ordinary comes to be described, that it ought to be attempted. This beauty in language is not to be considered as bearing an analogy to dress by which the whole person is adorned, but to those jewels which are intended solely for the decoration of certain parts, and whose effect depends very much on their being placed with judgment. It is an invariable rule, that in every poem and oration, whatever be the subject, the language, in the general tenor of it, ought to be harmonious and easy. A deviation in a few particular passages may not only be pardonable but even meritorious. Yet this merit, when there is a merit in introducing harsh sounds and jarring numbers, as on some occasions it doubtless is, receives great relief from its contrariety to the general flow of the style. And with regard to the general flow, as I observed already, the rule holds invariably. Supposing the subject of the piece were the twelve labours of Hercules, should the poet, in order to adapt his language to his theme, choose words of the most difficult utterance, and through the whole performance studiously avoid harmony and grace; far from securing to himself admiration, he would not even be read.

I shall only add, that though it is not prudent in an author to go a step out of his way in quest of this capricious beauty, who, when she does not

act spontaneously, does nothing gracefully, a poet in particular may not unreasonably be more solicitous to avoid her opposite, especially in the expression of the more striking thoughts; as nothing in such a case can be more ungraceful in the style, than when, either in sound or in measure, it serves as a contrast to the sentiment.

CHAP. II.

Of vivacity as depending on the number of the Words.

SECTION I.

This quality explained and exemplified.

WHEN I entered on the subject of vivacity *, I observed that this quality of style might result either from a happy choice of words, from their number, or from their arrangement. The first I have already discussed, and shown how words may conduce to vivacity, not only from their sense, whether they be proper or figurative, but also from their sound.

I come now to consider how far vivacity may be affected by the number of the words. On

* Book III. Chap. i.

this article it may be established as a maxim that admits no exception, and it is the only maxim which this article admits, that the fewer the words are, provided neither propriety nor perspicuity be violated, the expression is always the more vivid. "Brevity," says Shakespeare, "is the soul of "wit*." Thus much is certain, that of whatever kind the sentiment be, witty, humorous, grave, animated, or sublime, the more briefly it is expressed, the energy is the greater, or the sentiment is the more enlivened, and the particular quality for which it is eminent, the more displayed.

Among the ancients the Lacedemonians were the most remarkable for conciseness. To use few words, to speak energetically, and to be laconic, were almost synonymous. As when the rays of the sun are collected into the focus of a burning-glass, the smaller the spot is which receives them, compared with the surface of the glass, the greater is the splendor; or as in distillation, the less the quantity of spirit is, that is extracted by the still, compared with the quantity of liquor from which the extraction is made, the greater is the strength; so in exhibiting our sentiments by speech, the narrower the compass of words is, wherein the thought is comprised, the more energetic is the expression. Accordingly we shall find, that the very

* Hamlet.

same sentiment expressed diffusely, will be admitted barely to be just; expressed concisely, will be admired as spirited.

To recur to examples, the famous answer returned by the Countess of Dorset, to the letter of Sir Joseph Williamson, secretary of state to Charles the Second, nominating to her a member for the borough of Appleby, is an excellent illustration of this doctrine. "I have been bullied," says her ladyship, "by an usurper, I have been neglected by a "court, but I will not be dictated to by a subject, "your man sha'n't stand *." If we consider the meaning, there is mention made here of two facts, which it was impossible that any body of common sense, in this lady's circumstances, should not have observed, and of a resolution in consequence of these, which it was natural for every person who had a resentment of bad usage to make. Whence then results the vivacity, the fire which is so manifest in the letter? Not from any thing extraordinary in the matter, but purely from the laconism of the manner. An ordinary spirit would have employed as many pages to express the same thing, as there are affirmations in this short letter. The epistle might in that case have been very sensible, and withal very dull, but would never have been

* Catalogue of royal and noble authors.

thought worthy of being recorded as containing any thing uncommon, or deserving a reader's notice.

Of all our English poets none hath more successfully studied conciseness, or rendered it more conducive to vivacity, than Pope. Take the following lines as one example of a thousand which might be produced from his writings:

> See how the world its veterans rewards!
> A youth of frolics, an old age of cards:
> Fair to no purpose, artful to no end;
> Young without lovers, old without a friend;
> A fop their passion, but their prize a sot:
> Alive ridiculous, and dead forgot *.

Nothing is more evident than that the same passage may have great beauties and great blemishes. There is a monotony in the measure of the above quotation, (the lines being all so equally divided by the pauses) which would render it, if much longer, almost as tiresome to the ear as a speech in a French tragedy; besides, the unvaried run of antitheses through five successive lines is rather too much, as it gives an air of quaintness to the whole. Yet that there is a great degree of liveliness in the expression is undeniable. This excellence is not, I acknowledge, to be ascribed solely to the brevity. Somewhat is doubtless imputable both to the words themselves, and to their arrangement; but the first mentioned is still the principal cause.

* Moral Essays, Ep. II.

The trope in the fifth line, *their passion*, for *the object of their passion*, conduceth to vivacity, not only as being a trope, but as rendering the expression briefer, and thereby more nervous. Even the omission of the substantive verb, of the conjunctions, and of the personal pronouns, contribute not a little to the same end. Such ellipses are not indeed to be adopted into prose, and may even abound too much in verse. This author in particular hath sometimes exceeded in this way, and hath sacrificed both perspicuity and a natural simplicity of expression, to the ambition of saying a great deal in few words. But there is no beauty of style for which one may not pay too high a price. And if any price ought to be deemed too high, either of these certainly ought; especially perspicuity, because it is this which throws light on every other beauty.

Propriety may sometimes be happily violated. An improper expression may have a vivacity, which, if we should reduce the words to grammatical correctness, would be annihilated. Shakespeare abounds in such happy improprieties. For instance,

> And be these juggling fiends no more believed,
> That palter with us in a double sense,
> That *keep the word of promise to our ear,*
> *And break it to our hope* *.

* Macbeth.

In another place,

———It is a custom
More honour'd in the breach than the observance *.

David's accusation of Joab, that *he had shed the blood of war in peace* †, or what Solomon says of the virtuous woman, that *she eateth not the bread of idleness* ‡, serve also to verify the same remark. Every body understands these expressions; every body that knows English, perceives an impropriety in them, which it is perhaps impossible to mend without destroying their energy §. But a beauty

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* Hamlet. † 1 Kings ii. 5. ‡ Prov. xxxi. 37.

§ The Hebraism in each of these quotations from scripture, constitutes the peculiarity; and as the reasons are nearly equal with regard to all modern languages, for either admitting or rejecting an oriental idiom, the observation will equally affect other European tongues into which the Bible is translated. A scrupulous attention to the purity of the language into which the version is made, must often hurt the energy of the expression. Saci, who in his translation hath been too solicitous to frenchify the style of scripture, hath made nonsense of the first passage, and (to say the least) hath greatly enervated the second. The first he renders in such a manner as implies that Joab had killed Abner and Amasa oftener than once. "Ayant repandu leur sang" (le sang d'Abner et d'Amasa) "durant la paix, comme il avoit fait, durant la guerre." A terrible man this Joab,

And thrice he routed all his foes, and thrice he slew the slain.

The other passage he renders "Elle n'a point mangé son pain dans "l'oisiveté." The meaning is very indistinctly expressed here. Can a sluggard be said to be idle when eating? or does the most industrious disposition require that in the time of eating one should be employed in something else? Such a translation as this, is too free to exhibit the style of the original, too literal to express the sense, and therefore is unlucky enough to hit neither. Diodati hath succeeded better in both. The

that is unperceivable is no beauty. Without perspicuity, words are not signs, they are empty sounds; speaking is beating the air, and the most fluent declaimer is but as a sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal.

Yet there is a sort and a degree of obscurity which ought not to be considered as falling under this censure. I speak not of those sentences wherein more is meant than meets the ear, the literal meaning being intended purely to suggest a further meaning, which the speaker had chiefly in view. I gave some examples in this way, when on the subject of perspicuity, and showed that they are not to be regarded as exceptions from the rule *. But what I here principally allude to is a species of darkness, if I may call it so, resulting from an excess of vivacity and conciseness, which, to a certain degree, in some sorts of composition, is at least pardonable. In the ode, for instance, the enthusiastic fervour of the poet naturally carries him to overlook those minutenesses

last he renders literally as we do, and the first in this manner, "Spanden-"do in tempo di pace, il sangue che si spande in battaglia." This clearly enough exhibits the sense, and is sufficiently literal. The meaning of the other passage stripped of the idiom, and expressed in plain English, is neither more nor less than this, "She eateth not the bread which she hath "not earned." In many cases it may be difficult to say whether propriety or energy should have the preference. I think it safer in every dubious case to secure the former.

* Book II. Chap. viii. Sect. 2.

in language, on which perspicuity very much depends. It is to abruptness of transition, boldness of figure, laconism of expression, the congenial issue of that frame of mind in which the piece is composed, that we owe entirely the

Thoughts that breathe, and words that burn.

Hence proceeds a character of the writing, which may not unhappily be expressed in the words of Milton, "Dark with excessive bright." I have compared vivacity produced by a happy conciseness to the splendour occasioned by concentring sunbeams into a little spot. Now, if by means of this the light is rendered dazzling, it is no more a fit medium for viewing an object in, than too weak a light would be. Though the causes be contrary, the effects are in this respect the same. Objects in both are seen indistinctly. But the cases to which this observation is applicable are extremely few.

Indeed, the concise manner in any form is not alike adapted to every subject. There are some subjects which it particularly suits. For example, the dignity and authority of the preceptive style receives no small lustre from brevity. In the following words of Michael to Adam, how many important lessons are couched in two lines?

Nor love thy life, nor hate; but what thou liv'st,
Live well; how long, or short, permit to Heaven *.

* Paradise Lost.

The aphoristic style, and the proverbial, receive likewise considerable strength from the laconic manner. Indeed, these two styles differ from each other only as the one conveys the discoveries in science, and the other the maxims of common life. In Swift's Detached Thoughts we find a few specimens of this manner. "The power of fortune is "confessed by the miserable; the happy ascribe all "their success to merit."—"Every man desires to "live long; but no man would be old."—"A nice "man is a man of nasty ideas."—"The sluggard," saith Solomon, "hideth his hand in his bosom; it "grieveth him to bring it to his mouth*."—"The desire of the slothful killeth him, for his "hands refuse to labour†."—"A fool," says the son of Sirach, "travelleth with a word, as a wo-"man in labour of a child‡." It is indeed true, that a great degree of conciseness is scarcely attainable, unless the style be figurative; but it is also true, that the vivacity of the expression is not to be attributed solely to the figure, but partly to the brevity occasioned by the figure. But though the combination of the figurative with the concise is very common, it is not necessary. This will appear from some of the examples already given, wherein, though we discover a happy comprehension of a great deal of meaning in little compass,

* Proverbs xxvi. 15. † Ibid. xxi. 25. ‡ Eccles. xix. 11.

there is neither trope nor figure. Nor, indeed, is there either of these, in the picture that Swift gives of himself, where he says, "I am too proud "to be vain," in which simplicity, perspicuity, and vivacity, are all happily united. An inferior writer, in attempting to delineate fully the same character, would have employed many sentences, and not have said near so much. Further, the writer on politics often avails himself of a sententious conciseness, which adds no little energy to the sentiments he unfolds. Of the successful application of brevity in this way, we have an excellent model in the Spirit of Laws. It hath no bad effect, if used sparingly, even in narrative *.

On the other hand, the kinds of writing which are less susceptible of this ornament are the descriptive, the pathetic, the declamatory, especially the last. It is, besides, much more suitable in writing than in speaking. A reader has the command of his time, he may read fast or slow, as he finds convenient; he can peruse a sentence a second time when necessary, or lay down the book and think. But if, in haranguing to the people, you comprise a great deal in few words, the hearer must have uncommon quickness of apprehension to catch your

* The *veni, vidi, vici*, of Cæsar derives hence its principal beauty; *I came, I saw, I conquered*, is not equal. So small a circumstance, as the repetition of the pronoun, without which the sentence in our language would appear maimed, takes much from its vivacity and force.

meaning, before you have put it out of his power, by engaging his attention to something else. In such orations, therefore, it is particularly unseasonable; and by consequence, it is, in all kinds of writing addressed to the people, more or less so, as they partake more or less of popular declamation.

SECTION II.

The principal offences against Brevity considered.

BUT though this energetic brevity is not adapted alike to every subject, we ought, on every subject, to avoid its contrary, a languid redundancy of words. It is sometimes proper to be copious, but never to be verbose. I shall, therefore, now consider some of the principal faults against that quality of style of which I have been treating.

PART I.—*Tautology.*

THE first I shall take notice of is *the tautology*, which is either a repetition of the same sense in different words, or a representation of any thing, as the cause, condition, or consequence of itself. Of the first, which is also the least, take the following example from Addison:

The dawn is overcast;———the morning lours;
And———heavily in clouds brings on the day *——

Here the same thought is repeated thrice in different words. Of the last kind I shall produce a specimen from Swift. "I look upon it as *my* "*duty*, so far as God hath enabled me, and as "long as I keep within the bounds of truth, of "*duty*, and of decency—†" It would be strange indeed that any man should think it his duty to transgress the bounds of duty. Another example from the same hand you have in the words which follow: "So it is, that I must be *forced* to get "home, partly by stealth, and partly by *force* ‡." "How many are there," says Bolingbroke, "by "whom these *tidings* of good *news* were never "heard §?" This is *tidings* of *tidings*, or *news* of *news*. "Never did Atticus succeed better in "gaining the *universal* love and esteem of *all* "men ¶." Either of the two words in italics might have been used, but not both.

It is also considered as of the nature of tautology, to lengthen a sentence by coupling words altogether or nearly synonymous, whether they be substantives or adjectives, verbs or adverbs. This fault is very common, and to be found even in our best writers. "In the Attic commonwealth,"

* Cato. † Letter to Lord Lyttelton. ‡ Letter to Sheridan.
§ Ph. Fr. 38. ¶ Spectator, No. 467. Z.

says Doctor Swift, "it was the *privilege* and "*birthright* of every *citizen* and *poet*, to rail *aloud* "and *in public**."—If he had said simply, "In "the Attic commonwealth it was the privilege "of every citizen, to rail in public,"—the sentence would have lost nothing of the sense. And it is an invariable maxim, that words which add nothing to the sense or to the clearness, must diminish the force of the expression. There are certain synonymas which it is become customary with some writers regularly to link together; insomuch that a reader no sooner meets with one of them, than he anticipates the introduction of its usual attendant. It is needless to quote authorities, I shall only produce a few of those couples which are wont to be thus conjoined, and which every English reader will recollect with ease. Such are, *plain and evident*, *clear and obvious*, *worship and adoration*, *pleasure and satisfaction*, *bounds and limits*, *suspicion and jealousy*, *courage and resolution*, *intents and purposes*. The frequent recurrence of such phrases is not indeed more repugnant to vivacity than it is to dignity of style.

But, is there no occasion on which synonymous words may be used properly? I answer, There are two occasions; and I do not at present recollect any other. One is, when an obscurer term, which

* Preface to the Tale of a Tub.

we cannot avoid employing, on account of some connection with what either precedes or follows, needs to be explained by one that is clearer. The other is, when the language of the passions is exhibited. Passion naturally dwells on its object: the impassioned speaker always attempts to rise in expression; but when that is impracticable, he recurs to repetition and synonymy, and thereby in some measure produces the same effect. The hearer perceiving him, as it were, overpowered by his subject, and at a loss to find words adequate to the strength of his feelings, is by sympathy carried along with him, and enters into all his sentiments. There is in this case an expression in the very effort shown by recurring to synonymas, which supplies the deficiency in the words themselves. Bolingbroke exclaims in an invective against the times, "But all is little, and "low, and mean among us *." It must be owned, that there is here a kind of amplification, or at least a stronger expression of indignation, than any one of these three epithets could have effected alone; yet there is no climax in the sentence, and in this metaphorical use of the words, no sensible difference of signification †. But every body must perceive that this manner suits only

* Spirit of Patriotism.

† In these words of Cicero concerning Catiline, "Abiit, excessit, evasit, "erupit," there is a stronger expression of triumph than in any of them single.

the popular and declamatory style, and that in those compositions which admit no species of the pathetic, it can have no place.

I observe further, that an adjective and its substantive will sometimes include a tautology. This happens when the former expresses nothing, but what is implied in the signification of the latter. "Let them," says the Craftsman, "throw "as much *foul dirt* at me as they please*." Of the same stamp are, the *verdant green*, the *umbrageous shade*, the *sylvan forest*, expressions not frequently to be met with, except perhaps in the writings of some of our minor poets. *First aggressors*, *standard-pattern*, *subject-matter*, and *some few*, are much commoner, but deserve to be exploded for the same reason.

Lastly, in some single words there is so much of the appearance of tautology, that they ought in prose at least to be avoided. Such are, *Most-highest*, *worser*, *lesser*, *chiefest*, *extremest*; for *Most-high*, *worse*, *less*, *chief*, *extreme*. The first occurs often in the translation of the psalms inserted in the liturgy, and has thence acquired something venerable in its appearance †? the

* No. 232.

† It is to this, I think, solely, that the approbation of those whose ears are accustomed to that expression in public worship, is to be ascribed, and not as Dr Lowth supposes, [Introd. Adject.] to a singular propriety from the subject to which it is applied, the Supreme Being, who is higher than

second, though used in Shakespeare's time, is at present obsolete. I know not why the other three have not before now shared the same fate.

PART II.—*Pleonasm.*

Another trespass against this species of vivacity is the *pleonasm*, which implies barely superfluity, or more than enough. Here, though the words do not, as in the tautology, repeat the sense, they add nothing to it. For instance, "They "returned *back again* to the *same* city *from* "whence they came *forth*;" instead of "They "returned to the city whence they came." The five words *back*, *again*, *same*, *from*, and *forth*, are mere expletives. They serve neither for ornament nor for use, and are therefore to be regarded as encumbrances. "I went home," says the Guardian, "full of *a great many* serious reflec-"tions*;" much better, "full of serious reflec-"tions." "If he happens," says the Spectator, "to have any leisure *upon his hands*†." To what purpose *upon his hands?* "The everlasting

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the highest. For if this reason were good, we should also find a singular propriety in the phrases *most wisest*, and *most best*, when applied to God, because he is as certainly wiser than the wisest, and better than the best. By the same rule *the Supremest Being* would be a title much more emphatical than *the Supreme Being*.

* No. 34. † No. 43.

"club," says the same author, "treats all other "clubs with *an eye of* contempt*;" for "treats "all other clubs with contempt." *To treat with the eye*, is also chargeable with impropriety and vulgarism. "Flavia, who is the mamma," says the Tatler, "has all the charms and desires of "youth still *about her* †." The two last words are at least superfluous.

In such a phrase as this, "I wrote *a letter* to "you yesterday," the French critics would find a pleonasm; because it means no more than what is clearly expressed in these words, "I wrote to "you yesterday." Yet in the last form there is an ellipsis of the regimen of the active verb; and one would imagine, that the supplying of an ellipsis could never constitute a pleonasm. It is at least certain, that where the supply is so unnecessary, as it is here, it is better to follow the usual mode of speaking. But when any additional circumstance requires the insertion of the noun, the nicest judge will not condemn the expression as pleonastic; as, "I wrote you a "long letter yesterday." "This is the third letter I have written you on the same sub-"ject‡."

* No. 73. † No. 206.

‡ It deserves our notice, that on this article, the idiom of the tongue hath great influence, insomuch that an expression in one language may contain a pleonasm, which, if literally rendered into another, would express no more than is quite necessary. Thus the phrase in French, "Il lui donna

It may not be improper here to remark, that every word that is accounted an expletive, doth not always constitute a pleonasm. For example, the *do* and the *did*, as the signs of the tenses, are frequently necessary, and sometimes emphatical. The idiom of the language renders them for the most part necessary in negation and interrogation; and even in affirmation they are found in certain circumstances to give an emphasis to the expression. For instance, "Did I object to this "measure formerly? I do object to it still." Or "What I did publicly affirm then, I do affirm "now, and I will affirm always." The contrast of the different tenses in these examples, is more precisely marked by such monosyllables, as are intended singly to point out that circumstance, than they can be by the bare inflections of the verb. The particle *there*, when it is not an adverb of place, may be considered as a kind of expletive, since we cannot assign to it a separate sense. Nevertheless it is no pleonasm; for though it is not easy to define in words the import of such terms, yet if the omission of them make the

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"des coups de *sa* main," is pleonastic; but there is no pleonasm in these words in English, "He gave him blows with *his* hand." On the contrary, "Il lui donna des coups de main," is proper in French. "He gave him "blows with hand," is defective in English. The sense, however, may be expressed in our language with equal propriety and greater brevity in this manner, "He gave him handy blows."

expression appear either still or defective, they are not to be regarded as useless.

Lastly, I shall observe on this subject, that as there are some single words, which have I know not what air of tautology, there are some also which have a pleonastic appearance. Such are the following, *unto, until, selfsame, foursquare, devoid, despoil, disannul, muchwhat, oftentimes, nowadays, downfall, furthermore, wherewithal;* for *to, till, same, square, void, spoil, annul, much, often, now, fall, further, wherewith.* The use of such terms many writers have been led into, partly from the dislike of monosyllables, partly from the love of variety. The last end it hardly answers, as the simple word is still included; and as to the first, I am persuaded that this dislike hath carried some modern writers to the other extreme, and, I imagine, the worse extreme of the two. It hath proceeded on an opinion, which I shall afterwards evince to be erroneous, that a frequent recurrence of monosyllables is inconsistent with harmony. However, with regard to the words specified, it would not be right to preclude entirely the use of them in poetry, where the shackles of metre render variety more necessary, but they ought to be used very sparingly, if at all, in prose.

It is worth while to remark, that the addition of a short syllable to the termination of a word, when that syllable hath no separate signification,

doth not exhibit the appearance of a pleonasm, which any syllable prefixed, or a long one added, never fails to exhibit. Thus, *mountain, fountain, meadow, valley, island, climate,* are as good as *mount, fount, mead, vale, isle, clime,* and in many cases preferable. Indeed the words *fount, mead, vale,* and *clime,* are now almost confined to poetry. Several adjectives may in like manner be lengthened by the addition of an unaccented syllable, as *ecclesiastical, astronomical, philosophical, grammatical,* from *ecclesiatic, astronomic, philosophic, grammatic;* in all which, if the choice be not a matter of absolute indifference, it may at least be determined by the slightest consideration of variety or of sound. Sometimes custom insensibly assigns different meanings to such different formations, as in the words *comic* and *comical, tragic* and *tragical, politic* and *political.* Though the words here coupled were at first equally synonymous with those before mentioned, they are not entirely so at present. *Tragic* denotes belonging to tragedy; *tragical,* resembling tragedy. The like holds of *comic* and *comical.* We say, "the *tragic* muse, the *comic* muse;" and "a "*tragic* poet," for a writer of tragedy, "a *comic* "poet," for a writer of comedy; but "I heard a "*tragical* story," for a mournful story, and "I "met with a *comical* adventure," for a droll adventure. We say, "a *politic* man," for an artful fellow; but a *political* writer, for a writer on poli-

tics. There is not, however, a perfect uniformity in such applications, for we constantly use the phrase "the body *politic*," and not *political*, for the civil society. On the whole, however, it would seem that what is affixed, especially when unaccented, is conceived as more closely united to the word, than what is prefixed is conceived to be. In this last case the supernumerary syllable, if it make no change on the signification, always conveys the notion of an expletive, which is not suggested in the first.

But before I quit this subject, it will not be beside the purpose to observe, that there are cases in which a certain species of pleonasm may not only be pardonable, but even have a degree of merit. It is at least entitled to indulgence, when it serves to express a pertinent earnestness of affirmation on an interesting subject, as in phrases like these, "We have seen with our eyes," "we "have heard with our ears," which perhaps are to be found in every language *. Again, in poetical description, where the fancy is addressed, epithets which would otherwise be accounted superfluous, if used moderately, are not without effect. The *azure heaven*, the *silver moon*, the *blushing morn*, the *seagirt isle*. Homer abounds in such. They often occur also in sacred writ.

* Vocemque his auribus hausi. Vidi ante oculos ipse meos.

The warm manner of the ancient Orientals, even in their prose compositions, holds much more of poesy, than the cold prosaic diction of us moderns and Europeans. A stroke of the pencil, if I may so express myself, is almost always added to the arbitrary sign, in order the more strongly to attach the imagination. Hence it is not with them, *the beasts, the birds, the fish, the heaven, and the earth;* but *the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, the fish of the sea, the heaven above, and the earth beneath.* But though in certain cases there is some indulgence given to terms which may properly be styled pleonastic, I scarcely think that an epithet which is merely tautological, is in any case tolerable.

Part III.—*Verbosity.*

The third and last fault I shall mention against a vivid conciseness is *verbosity.* This it may be thought coincides with the pleonasm already discussed. One difference however is this; in the pleonasm there are words which add nothing to the sense; in the verbose manner, not only single words, but whole clauses, may have a meaning, and yet it were better to omit them, because what they mean is unimportant. Instead, therefore, of enlivening the expression, they make it languish. Another difference is, that in a proper pleonasm a complete correction is always made by razing. This will not always answer in the

verbose style; it is often necessary to alter as well as blot.

It will not be improper here further to observe, that by *verbosity* I do not mean the same thing which the French express by the word *verbiage*, as some persons, misled by etymology, may be inclined to think. By this term is commonly understood a parade of fine words, plausibly strung together, so as either to conceal a total want of meaning, or to disguise something weak and inconclusive in the reasoning. The former, with which alone we are here concerned, is merely an offence against vivacity, the latter is more properly a transgression of the laws of perspicuity.

One instance of a faulty exuberance of words is the intemperate use of circumlocution. There are circumstances wherein this figure is allowable, there are circumstances wherein it is a beauty, there are circumstances wherein it is a blemish. We indulge it often for the sake of variety, as when, instead of *the women*, an author says *the fair sex*, or when instead of *the sun*, a poet puts *the lamp of day*; we choose it sometimes for the sake of decency, to serve as a sort of veil to what ought not to be too nakedly exposed, or for the sake of avoiding an expression that might probably offend *. Sometimes indeed propriety re-

* See Book III. Chap. I. Sect. 3. Part 3.

quires the use of circumlocution, as when Milton says of Satan, who had been thrown down headlong into hell,

> *Nine times the space that measures day and night*
> *To mortal men*, he with his horrid crew
> Lay vanquish'd rolling in the fiery gulf *.

To have said *nine days and nights*, would not have been proper, when talking of a period before the creation of the sun, and consequently before time was portioned out to any being in that manner. Sometimes this figure serves, as it were accidentally, to introduce a circumstance which favours the design of the speaker, and which to mention of plain purpose, without apparent necessity, would appear both impertinent and invidious. An example I shall give from Swift: "One of these authors (*the fellow that was pillor-*"*ied*, I have forgot his name) is so grave, sen-"tentious, dogmatical a rogue, that there is no "enduring him †." What an exquisite antonomasia have we in this parenthesis! Yet he hath rendered it apparently necessary by his saying, "I have forgot his name." Sometimes even the vivacity of the expression may be augmented by a periphrasis, as when it is made to supply the place of a separate sentence. Of this the words of Abraham afford an instance: "Shall not *the*

* Paradise Lost, B. I.

† Letters concerning the Sacramental Test.

judge of all the earth do right*?" *The judge of all the earth* is a periphrasis for GOD, and as it represents him in a character to which the acting unjustly is peculiarly unsuitable, it serves as an argument in support of the sentiment, and is therefore conducive even to conciseness. In this view we may consider that noted circumlocution employed by Cicero, who, instead of saying simply, Milo's domestics killed Clodius, says, "They "did that which every master would have wish-"ed his servants to do in such an exigence†." It is far from being enough to say of this passage, that it is an euphemism, by which the odious word *killed* is avoided. It contains also a powerful vindication of the action, by an appeal to the conscience of every hearer, whether he would not have approved it in his own case. But when none of these ends can be answered by a periphrastical expression, it will inevitably be regarded as injuring the style by flattening it. Of this take the following example from the Spectator, "I won't say, we see often, in *the next tender* "*things to children*, tears shed without much "grieving‡." The phrase here employed appears, besides, affected and far-fetched.

Another source of languor in the style is when

* Gen. xviii. 25.

† "Fecerunt id servi Milonis,—quod suos quisque servos in tali re facere "voluisset." Cicero pro Milone.

‡ No. 95.

such clauses are inserted, as to a superficial view appear to suggest something which heightens, but on reflection are found to pre-suppose something which abates the vigour of the sentiment. Of this I shall give a specimen from Swift: "Neither is any condition of life more honour-"able in the sight of God than another, otherwise "he would be a respecter of persons, *which he as-*"*sures us he is not* *." It is evident that this last clause doth not a little enervate the thought, as it implies but too plainly, that without this assurance from God himself, we should naturally conclude him to be of a character very different from that here given him by the preacher.

A-kin to this is the juvenile method of loading every proposition with asseverations. As such a practice in conversation more commonly infuseth a suspicion of the speaker's veracity, than it engages the belief of the hearer, it hath an effect somewhat similar in writing. In our translation of the Bible, God is represented as saying to Adam, concerning the fruit of the tree of knowledge, "In the day thou "eatest thereof, thou shalt *surely* die †." The adverb *surely*, instead of enforcing, enfeebles the denunciation. My reason is the same as in the former case. A gound of mistrust is insinuated,

* Sermon on mutual Subjection.

† Gen. ii. 17.

to which no affirmation is a counterpoise. Are such adverbs then never to be used? Not when either the character of the speaker, or the evidence of the thing, is such as precludes the smallest doubt. In other cases they are pertinent enough. But as taste itself is influenced by custom, and as, for that reason, we may not be quick in discerning a fault to which our ears have from our infancy been habituated, let us consider how it would affect us in an act of parliament, to read that the offender shall for the first offence *certainly* be liable to such a penalty, and for the second he shall *surely* incur such another. This style would appear intolerable even to one of ordinary discernment. Why? The answer is obvious. It ill suits the dignity of the British senate, to use a manner which supposes that its authority or power can be called in question. That which hath misled our translators in the passage quoted, as in many others, hath been an attempt to express the import of a Hebraism, which cannot be rendered literally into any European tongue. But it is evident, that they have not sufficiently attended to the powers of the language which they wrote. The English hath two futures, no inconsiderable advantage on some occasions, both for perspicuity and for emphasis. The one denotes simply the futurition of the event, the other also makes the veracity and power of the speaker

vouchers of its futurition. The former is a bare declaration; the latter is always in the second person and the third, unless when used imperatively, either a promise or a threatening. No language that I know, exactly hits this distinction but our own. In other languages you must infer, not always infallibly, from the tenor of the story, whether the future is of the one import or of the other; in English you find this expressed in the words *.

Further, it was observed that affirmative adverbs are no less improper when doubt is entirely precluded by the evidence of the fact, than when it is prevented by the authority of the speaker. I have given an example of the latter, and shall

* This remark needs perhaps a further illustration, and in order to this it will be necessary to recur to some other language. The passage quoted is thus translated into Latin by Castalio, *Si ea vesceris, morieris*. He judged right not to add *certè* or *profectò* even in Latin. Neither of these adverbs could have rendered the expression more definite; and both are liable to the same exception with the English adverb *surely*. Yet take the version as it stands, and there is an evident ambiguity in the word *morieris*. It may be either the declaration of one who knew that there was a poisonous quality in the fruit, and meant only to warn Adam of his danger, by representing the natural consequence of eating it; or it may be the denunciation of a legislator against the transgression of his law. Every one who understands English, will perceive immediately, that, on the first supposition, he must render the words into our language, "If thou eat thereof, thou *wilt* die;" and on the second supposition, he must render them, "If thou eat thereof, thou *shalt* die." If there be any thing emphatical in the original idiom, it serves here, in my opinion, to mark the distinction between a simple declaration and the sanction of a law; which are perfectly distinguished in our tongue by the two futures.

now produce one of the former. An Israelite informing David concerning Goliath, is represented in our version as saying, "*Surely*, to defy "Israel is he come up*." Had the giant shown himself between the camps, and used menacing gestures, or spoken words which nobody understood, this expression would have been natural and proper. But no man could have talked in this manner who had himself been a witness that every day, for forty days successively, this champion had given an open defiance to Israel in the most explicit terms, and in the audience of all the army. Such adverbs always weaken an assertion that is founded on the evidence of sense, or even of unexceptionable testimony, and are suited only to cases of conjecture or probability at most. It requires a certain justness of taste to know when we have said enough, through want of which, when we attempt to say more, we say less.

Another example, of a nature pretty similar, and arising from a similar cause, is the manner wherein our interpreters have attempted, in the New Testament, to strengthen the negation, wherever the double negative † occurs in the Greek, even in the most authoritative threatenings, by rendering it sometimes *in no case*, sometimes *in no wise*. It is evident that, in such instances, neither of these phrases expresseth more than the

* 1 Sam. xvii. 25. † ου μη.

single adverb *not*, and as they partake of the nature of circumlocution and betray an unsuccessful aim at saying more, they in effect debilitate the expression. The words "Ye shall *not* enter the "kingdom of heaven," as they have more simplicity, have also, from the mouth of a legislator, more dignity and weight than "ye shall *in no* "*case*," or "*in no wise* enter into it," as though there were various ways and means of getting thither. The two negatives of the Greek are precisely on the same footing with the two negatives of the French *, our single particle *not* is a full equivalent to both. For should a translator from the French attempt to render every double negative by such a periphrasis in English, his version would be justly accounted ridiculous. It may be thought a consequence of this doctrine, that the solemn protestation, "Verily, verily, I say unto "you," so often adopted by our Lord, would rather weaken than enforce the sentiment. But the case is different. As these words enter not into the body of the proposition, but are employed solely to introduce it, they are to be considered purely as a call to attention, serving not so much to affirm the reality, as the importance of what is

* *Ne pas* or *non point*. Sometimes the French use even three negatives where we can properly employ but one in English, as in this sentence: "Je *ne* nie *pas* que je *ne* l'aye dit." "I do *not* deny that I said it." I believe no man who understands both languages will pretend that the negation here is expressed more strongly by them than by us.

to be said. Or if they are to be understood as affirming the reality, it is from this single consideration, because said by him.

I add, as another cause of a languid verbosity, the loading of the style with epithets, when almost every verb hath its attendant adverb, which may be called its epithet, and every substantive its attendant adjective, and when both adjectives and adverbs are often raised to the superlative degree. Epithets used sparingly and with judgment, have a great effect in enlivening the expression, but nothing has more of an opposite tendency than a profusion of them. That such profusion has this tendency may be deduced, partly from a principle already mentioned, partly from a principle which I am going to observe. That already mentioned is, that they lengthen the sentence without adding proportionable strength. The other principle is, that the crowding of epithets into a discourse betrays a violent effort to say something extraordinary, and nothing is a clearer evidence of weakness than such an effort when the effect is not correspondent. I would not, however, be understood to signify, that adjectives and adverbs are always to be regarded as mere epithets. Whatever is necessary for ascertaining the import of either noun or verb, whether by adding to the sense, or by confining it, is something more than an epithet, in

the common acceptation of that term. Thus when I say, " the *glorious* sun," the word *glorious* is an epithet, because it expresses a quality, which, being conceived always to belong to the object, is, like all its other qualities, comprehended in the name. But when I say " the *meridian* " sun," the word *meridian* is not barely an epithet, because it makes a real addition to the signification, denoting the sun in that situation wherein he appears at noon. The like may be said of " the *rising*," or " the *setting* sun." Again, when I say " the *towering* eagle," I use an epithet, because the quality *towering* may justly be attributed to all the kind; not so when I say " the *golden* " eagle" because the adjective *golden* serves to limit the sense of the word *eagle*, to one species only, and is therefore in effect a part of the name. Let it not be imagined hence, that mere epithets are always useless. Though all the essential qualities of a genus are included in the name, the scope of a discourse often renders it important, if not necessary, that some particular qualities should be specially attended to by the hearer. And these by consequence require to be specified by the speaker. On the contrary, a redundancy of these never fails to give a tiresome sameness to the composition, where substantives, and adjectives, verbs and adverbs, almost invariably strung together, offend not more against vivaci-

ty, than against harmony and elegance *. This vicious quality of style is sometimes denominated *juvenility*, as denoting immaturity of judgment, or an inexperience like that which would make a man mistake corpulency for the criterion of health and vigour. Besides, in young writers, a certain luxuriance in words is both more frequent and more pardonable.

There is one kind of composition, the paraphrase, of whose style verbosity is the proper character. The professed design of the paraphrast, is to say in many words what his text expresseth in few: accordingly, all the writers of this class must be at pains to provide themselves in a sufficient stock of synonymas, epithets, expletives, circumlocutions, and tautoligies, which are, in fact, the necessary implements of their craft. I took notice, when treating of the influence which the

* I cannot help thinking, that the following passage, which Rollin has quoted from Mascaron, as an example of style elevated and adorned by means of circumlocution and epithet, is justly exceptionable in this way. "Le roi, pour donner une marque immortelle de l'estime "et de l'amitié dont il honoroit ce grand capitaine (*M. de Turenne*), "donne une place illustre à ses glorieuses cendres, parmi ces maîtres "de la terre, qui conservent encore dans la magnificence de leurs "tombeaux une image de celle de leurs trônes." *The king, that he may give an immortal mark of the esteem and friendship wherewith he honoured this great captain, gives an illustrious place to his glorious ashes, among those masters of the earth, who still preserve, in the magnificence of their tombs, an image of that of their thrones.* Bel. Let. Liv. III. Chap. iii. Art. ii. § 5. In the quick succession of such yokemates as these, *immortal mark, great captain, illustrious place, glorious ashes, magnificent tombs*, there appears a strong attempt towards the grand manner, which, after all, terminates in the tumid.

choice of proper terms might have on vivacity, of one method of depressing their subject very common with these men, by generalising as much as possible the terms used in the text. The particulars just now recited are not only common with them, but essential to their work. I shall produce an example from an author, who is far from deserving to be accounted either the most verbose, or the least judicious of the tribe. But first, let us hear his text, the words of Jesus Christ: *Therefore, whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doth them, I will liken him to a wise man, who built his house upon a rock; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell not; for it was founded upon a rock* *. Now let us hear the paraphrast. "Where-"fore he that shall not only *hear* and *receive* "these my instructions, but also *remember*, and "*consider*, and *practise*, and *live according to* "them; such a man may be compared to one "who builds his house upon a rock; for as a "house founded upon a rock, stands *unshaken* "and *firm*, against all the assaults of rains and "floods and storms; so the man who, in his life "and conversation, *actually practises* and *obeys* "my instructions, will *firmly* resist all the temp-"tations of the devil, the allurements of pleasure,

* Matt. vii. 24 and 25.

"and the terrors of persecution, and shall be able "to stand in the day of judgment, and be reward-"ed of God *." It would be difficult to point out a single advantage which this wordy, not to say flatulent, interpretation hath of the text. Is it more perspicuous? It is much less so; although it is the chief, if not the sole end of this manner of writing, to remove every thing that can darken the passage paraphrased, and to render the sense as clear as possible. But lest this censure should be thought rash, let it be observed, that two things are clearly distinguished in the text, which are in themselves certainly distinct, to *hear* the commands of our master, and to *obey* them. There was the greater need that this distinction should be properly preserved, because it was the plain intention of the speaker to contrast those who heard and obeyed, with those who heard but obeyed not; as we learn from the similitude contained in the two following verses †. Yet this primary distinction is confounded in the parphrase, by a multitude of words partly synonymous, partly different in signification. Thus, for *whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them;* we have, "him that hears, and receives, and remem-"bers, and considers, and actually practises, and "obeys these my instructions, and lives according "to them." I might allege, as another instance of

* Dr Clarke. † Verses 26 and 27.

the want of perspicuity, that the duty and the reward are strangely blended throughout the whole. A deficiency of words is, no doubt, oftener than the contrary, a cause of obscurity; but this evil, as I had occasion formerly to remark, may also be the effect of an exuberance. By a multiplicity of words the sentiment is not set off and accommodated, but, like David equipt in Saul's armour, it is encumbered and oppressed.

Yet this is not the only, or perhaps the worst consequence, resulting from this manner of treating sacred writ. We are told of the torpedo, that it has the wonderful quality of numbing every thing it touches. A paraphrase is a torpedo. By its influence, the most vivid sentiments become lifeless, the most sublime are flattened, the most fervid chilled, the most vigorous enervated. In the very best compositions of this kind that can be expected, the Gospel may be compared to a rich wine of a high flavour, diluted in such a quantity of water as renders it extremely vapid. This would be the case, if the paraphrase (which is indeed hardly possible) took no tincture from the opinions of the paraphrast, but exhibited faithfully, though insipidly, the sense of the evangelist. Whereas, in all those paraphrases we have had occasion to be acquainted with, the Gospel may more justly be compared to such a wine, so much adulterated with a liquor of a very different taste and quality, that little of its original relish and properties can be

discovered. Accordingly, in one paraphrase, Jesus Christ appears a bigoted Papist; in another, a flaming Protestant: In one, he argues with all the sophistry of the Jesuit; in another, he declaims with all the fanaticism of the Jansenist: In one, you trace the metaphysical ratiocinations of Arminius; in another, you recognize the bold conclusions of Gomarus; and in each, you hear the language of a man, who has thoroughly imbibed the system of one or other of our Christian rabbis. So various and so opposite are the characters which, in those performances, our Lord is made to exhibit, and the dialects which he is made to speak. How different is his own character and dialect from them all! If we are susceptible of the impartiality requisite to constitute us proper judges in these matters, we shall find in him nothing that can be thought to favour the subtle disquisitions of a sect. His language is not, like that of all dogmatists, the language of a bastard-philosophy, which, under the pretence of methodizing religion, hath corrupted it, and, in less or more, tinged all the parties into which Christendom is divided. His language is not so much the language of the head as of the heart. His object is not science, but wisdom; accordingly, his discourses abound more in sentiments than in opinions*.

* I would not be understood to signify by this censure, that para-

But I have digressed from my subject, and shall therefore return to it by observing, that another species of verbosity, and the only one which remains to be taken notice of, is a prolixity in narration, arising from the mention of unnecessary circumstances. Circumstances may be denominated unnecessary, either because not of such importance as that the scope of the relation is affected by their being known, or because implied in the o-

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phrase can never be a useful mode of explication, though I own, that, in my opinion, the cases wherein it may be reckoned not improper, nor altogether unuseful, are not numerous. As the only valuable aim of this species of commentary is to give greater perspicuity to an original work, obscurity is the only reasonable plea for employing it. When the style is very concise or figurative, or when there is an allusion to customs or incidents now or here not generally known, to add as much as is necessary for supplying an ellipsis, explaining an unusual figure, or suggesting an unknown fact, or mode alluded to, may serve to render a performance more intelligible, without taking much from its energy. But if the use and occasions of paraphrase are only such as have been now represented, it is evident that there are but a few books of scripture, and but certain portions of those few, that require to be treated in this manner. The notions which the generality of paraphrasts (I say not all) entertain on this subject, are certainly very different. If we may judge from their productions, we should naturally conclude, that they have considered such a size of *subject matter* (if I may be indulged this once in the expression) as affording a proper foundation for a composition of such a magnitude; and have, therefore, laid it down as a maxim, from which, in their practice, they do not often depart, that the most commodious way of giving to their work the extent proposed, is that equal portions of the text (perspicuous or obscure, it matters not) should be spun out to equal length. Thus regarding only quantity, they view their text, and parcel it, treating it in much the same manner as goldbeaters and wiredrawers treat the metals on which their art is employed.

ther circumstances related. An error of the former kind belongs properly to the thought, of the latter to the language. For the first, when it is habitual, a man is commonly styled loquacious; for the second verbose. Such a sentence as the following would be an instance of the second; for with the first I am not here concerned. "On receiving "this information, he arose, went out, saddled "his horse, mounted him, and rode to town." All is implied in saying, "On receiving this informa- "tion, he rode to town." This manner, however, in a certain degree, is so strongly characteristic of the uncultivated, but unaffected, style of remote ages, that in books of the highest antiquity, particularly of the sacred code, it is not at all ungraceful. Of this kind are the following scriptural phrases, *He lifted up his voice and wept. She conceived and bore a son. He opened his mouth and said.* For my own part, I should not approve the delicacy of a translator, who, to modernize the style of the Bible, should repudiate every such redundant circumstance. It is true, that in strictness they are not necessary to the narration, but they are of some importance to the composition, as bearing the venerable signature of ancient simplicity. And in a faithful translation, there ought to be not only a just transmission of the writer's sense, but, as far as is consistent with perspicuity and the idiom of the tongue into

which the version is made, the character of the style ought to be preserved.

So much for the vivacity produced by conciseness, and those blemishes in style which stand in opposition to it, tautology, pleonasm, and verbosity.

CHAP. III.

Of Vivacity, as depending on the Arrangement of the Words.

Section I.

Of the nature of Arrangement, and the principal division of Sentences.

Having already shown how far vivacity depends either on the words themselves, or on their number, I come now, lastly, to consider how it is affected by their arrangement.

This, it must be owned, hath a very considerable influence in all languages, and yet there is not any thing which it is more difficult to regulate by general laws. The placing of the words in a sentence resembles, in some degree, the disposition of the figures in a history-piece. As the principal figure ought to have that situation in the picture which will, at the first glance, fix

the eye of the spectator, so the emphatical word ought to have that place in the sentence which will give it the greatest advantage for fixing the attention of the hearer. But in painting there can rarely arise a doubt concerning either the principal figure, or the principal place; whereas here it is otherwise. In many sentences it may be a question, both what is the word on which the emphasis ought to rest, and what is the situation which (to use the language of painters) will give it the highest relief. In most cases, both of simple narration and of reasoning, it is not of great consequence to determine either point: in many cases it is impossible. Besides, in English, and other modern languages, the speaker doth not enjoy that boundless latitude, which an orator of Athens or of Rome enjoyed, when haranguing in the language of his country. With us, who admit very few inflections, the construction, and consequently the sense, depends almost entirely on the order. With the Greeks and the Romans, who abound in inflections, the sense often remains unalterable, in whatever order you arrange the words.

But, notwithstanding the disadvantage which, in this respect, we Britons labour under, our language even here allows as much liberty as will, if we know how to use it, be of great service for invigorating the expression. It is true, indeed, that when neither the imagination nor

the passions of the hearer are addressed, it is hazardous in the speaker to depart from the practice which generally obtains in the arrangement of the words; and that even though the sense should not be in the least affected by the transposition. The temperament of our language is phlegmatic, like that of our climate. When, therefore, neither the liveliness of representation, nor the warmth of passion, serve, as it were, to cover the trespass, it is not safe to leave the beaten track. Whatever is supposed to be written or spoken in a cool and temperate mood, must rigidly adhere to the established order, which with us, as I observed, allows but little freedom. What is said will otherwise inevitably be exposed to the censure of quaintness and affectation, than which, perhaps, no censure can do greater prejudice to an orator. But as it is indubitable, that in many cases both composition and arrangement may, without incurring this reproach, be rendered greatly subservient to vivacity, I shall make a few observations on these, which I purpose to illustrate with proper examples.

Composition and arrangement in sentences, though nearly connected, and, therefore, properly in this place considered together, are not entirely the same. Composition includes arrangement and something more. When two sentences differ only in arrangement, the sense, the words, and the con-

struction, are the same; when they differ also in other articles of composition, there must be some difference in the words themselves, or, at least, in the manner of construing them. But I shall have occasion to illustrate this distinction in the examples to be afterwards produced.

Sentences are either simple or complex; simple, consisting of one member only; as this, "In the beginning, God created the heaven and "the earth*;" complex, consisting of two or more members linked together by conjunctions; as this, "Doubtless thou art our father, | though "Abraham be ignorant of us, | and Israel ac- "knowledge us not†." In the composition of the former, we have only to consider the distribution of the words; in that of the latter, regard must also be had to the arrangement of the members. The members too are sometimes complex, and admit a subdivision into clauses, as in the following example, "The ox knoweth his "owner, | and the ass his master's crib;—but "Israel doth not know, | my people doth not "consider‡." This decompound sentence hath two members, each of which is subdivided into two clauses. When a member of a complex sentence is simple, having but one verb, it is also called a clause. Of such a sentence as this,

* Gen. i. 1. † Isaiah lxiii. 16. ‡ Ibid. i. 3.

"I have called | but ye refused *;" we should say indifferently, that it consists of two members, or of two clauses †. The members or the clauses are not always perfectly separate, the one succeeding the other; one of them is sometimes very aptly enclosed by the other, as in the subsequent instance: "When Christ (who is our life) shall "appear;—then shall ye also appear with him "in glory ‡." This sentence consists of two members, the former of which is divided into two clauses; one of these clauses, "who is our life," being as it were embosomed in the other, "when "Christ shall appear."

So much for the primary distinction of sentences into simple and complex.

Section II.

Simple sentences.

With regard to simple sentences, it ought to be observed first, that there are degrees in simplicity. "God made man," is a very simple sentence. "On the sixth day God made man of the "dust of the earth after his own image," is still a

* Prov. i. 24.

† The words *member* and *clause* in English, are used as corresponding to the Greek κωλον and κομμα, and to the Latin *membrum* and *incisum*.

‡ Col. iii. 4.

simple sentence in the sense of rhetoricians and critics, as it hath but one verb, but less simple than the former, on account of the circumstances specified. Now it is evident, that the simpler any sentence is, there is the less scope for variety in the arrangement, and the less indulgence to a violation of the established rule. Yet even in the simplest, whatever strongly impresses the fancy, or awakens passion, is sufficient to a certain degree to authorize the violation.

No law of the English tongue relating to the disposition of words in a sentence, holds more generally than this, that the nominative has the first place, the verb the second, and the accusative, if it be an active verb that is employed, has the third *; if it be a substantive verb, the participle, adjective, or predicate of whatever denomination it be, occupies the third place. Yet this order, to the great advantage of the expression, is often inverted. Thus in the general uproar at Ephesus, on occasion of Paul's preaching among them against idolatry, we are informed, that the people exclaimed for some time without intermission, "Great is Diana of the

* Let it be observed, that in speaking of English syntax, I use the terms nominative and accusative, merely to avoid tedious circumlocutions, sensible that in strict propriety our substantives have no such cases. By the nominative I mean always the efficient, agent, or instrument operating, with which the verb agrees in number and person; by the accusative, the effect produced, the object aimed at, or the subject operated on.

"Ephesians*." Alter the arrangement, restore the grammatic order, and say, "Diana of the "Ephesians is great;" and you destroy at once the signature of impetuosity and ardour resulting, if you please to call it so, from the disarrangement of the words.

We are apt to consider the customary arrangement as the most consonant to nature, in consequence of which notion we brand every departure from it as a transgression of the natural order. This way of thinking ariseth from some very specious causes, but is far from being just. "Custom," it hath been said, "becomes a second "nature." Nay, we often find it strong enough to suppress the first. Accordingly, what is in this respect accounted natural in one language, is unnatural in another. In Latin, for example, the negative particle is commonly put before the verb, in English it is put after it; in French one negative is put before, and another after. If in any of these languages you follow the practice of any other, the order of the words will appear unnatural. We in Britain think it most suitable to nature to place the adjective before the substantive; the French and most other Europeans think the contrary. We range the oblique cases of the personal pronouns, as we do the nouns whose place they occupy, after the verb; they

* Acts xix. 28 and 34.

range them invariably before, notwithstanding that when the regimen is a substantive, they make it come after the verb, as we do. They and we have both the same reason, *custom*, which is different in different countries.

But it may be said, that more than this can be urged in support of the ordinary arrangement of a simple sentence above explained. The nominative, to talk in the logicians' style, is the subject; the adjective, or participle, is the predicate; and the substantive verb, the copula. Now, is it not most natural, that the subject be mentioned before the thing predicated of it? and what place so proper for the copula which unites them, as the middle? This is plausible, and, were the mind a pure intellect, without fancy, taste, or passion, perhaps it would be just. But as the case is different with human nature, I suspect there will be found little uniformity in this particular in different tongues, unless where, in respect either of matter or of form, they have been in a great measure derived from some common source.

The Hebrew is a very simple language, and hath not that variety either of moods or of conjunctions that is requisite for forming a complicated style. Here, therefore, if any where, one would expect to find an arrangement purely natural. Yet in this language, the most usual, and what would with them therefore be termed

the grammatical disposition of the words, is not the disposition above mentioned. In the historic style, or when past events are related, they commonly place the verb first, then the nominative, afterwards the regimen, predicate, or attendant circumstances *. The freedom which

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* Thus the very first words of Genesis, a book even among the books of Scripture remarkable for simplicity of style, are an evidence of this in the active verb: בראשית ברא אלהים את השמים ואת הארץ. The order is preserved exactly in the Vulgat: "In principio creavit Deus "cœlum et terram." That the same order is observed in disposing the substantive verb, appears from the fifth verse, ויהי בקר יום אחד ערב ויהי. The arrangement here is perfectly exhibited in the Latin version of Junius and Tremellius, which is generally very literal: "Sic fuit vespera "et fuit mane dici primi." Yet in English we should be apt to call the order in both passages, especially the last, rather unnatural. "In the be-"ginning created God the heavens and the earth." "And was evening "and was morning day first." The same thing might be illustrated in the passive verbs, in the neuter, and in the reciprocal, if necessary. Nothing therefore can be more evident, than that it is custom only which makes us Britons prefer one order of words, and others another, as the natural order. I am surprised that a critic of so much taste and discernment as Bouhours (see his *Entretiens d'Ariste et d'Eugene. 2. la langue Françoise*) should represent this as one of the excellencies of the French tongue, that it follows the natural order of the words. It is manifest, from what has been said, that its common arrangement has no more title to be denominated natural, than that of any other language. Nay, we may raise an argument for confuting this silly pretence, from the very laws that obtain in this language. Thus, if the natural order require that the regimen should follow the active verb, their way of arranging the oblique cases of the pronouns is unnatural, as they always place them before the verb; if, on the contrary, the natural order require that the regimen should precede the governing verb, their way of arranging nouns governed by verbs is unnatural, since they always place them after the verb; so that, whichever be the natural way, they de-

Greek and Latin allow on this article, renders it improper to denominate one order grammatical exclusively of others. I imagine, therefore, that perhaps the only principle in which on this subject we can safely rest, as being founded in nature, is, that whatever most strongly fixes the attention, or operates on the passion of the

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part from it in the disposition of one or other of these parts of speech. The like may be urged in regard to the nominative, which, though for the most part, it go before the active verb, in certain cases follows it. This happens frequently when the verb is preceded by the oblique case of the relative, as in this sentence: "Le retardement, *que souffre le lecteur*, le rend plus at-"tentif." And even in placing their adjectives, wherever use hath made exceptions from the general rule, it has carried the notion of what is natural along with it. They would call it as unnatural to say *homme jeune* as to say *gardien ange*. All therefore that can be affirmed with truth is, that the French adhere more inviolably than other nations to the ordinary arrangement established in the language. But this, as I hope to evince in the sequel, is one of the greatest imperfections of that tongue. The ease with which the Italian admits either order in the personal pronouns, especially in poetry, adds often to the harmony and the elegance, as well as to the vivacity of the expression, as in these lines of Metastasio's Artaserse;

Sallo amor, lo sanno i numi;
Il mio core, il tuo lo sa.

Bouhours, in the dialogue above mentioned, has dropt the character of critic and philosopher, for that of encomiast. He talks like a lover about his mistress. He sees neither blemish nor defect. All is beauty and excellence. For my part, if I were to prove the inferiority of French to Italian and Spanish, the two languages with which he compares it, I should not desire other or better topics for evincing the point, than the greater part of those which he has employed, in my judgment very unsuccessfully, for the contrary purpose.

speaker, will first seek utterance by the lips. This is agreeable to a common proverb, which perhaps, to speak in Shakespear's phrase *, *is something musty*, but significant enough, "Nearest "the heart, nearest the mouth." In these transpositions, therefore, I maintain, that the order will be found on examination, to be more strictly natural, than when the more general practice in the tongue is followed.

As an irrefragable argument in support of this doctrine, it may be pleaded, that though the most usual, which is properly the artificial order, be different in different languages, the manner of arranging, or (if you like the term better) transposing, above specified, which is always an effect of vivacity in the speaker, and a cause of producing a livelier conception in the hearer, is the same in all languages. It is for this reason amongst others, that I have chosen to take most of my examples on this topic, not from any original performance in English, but from the common translation of the Bible, and shall here observe once for all, that both in the quotations already made, and those hereafter to be made, our translators have exactly followed the order of the original. And indeed, all translators of any taste, unless when cramped by the genius of the tongue in which they wrote, have in

* Hamlet.

such cases done the same*. It may be proper also to remark, that there are some modern tongues, which in this respect are much more inflexible than ours.

The next example I shall produce is very similar to the former, as in it the substantive verb is preceded by the participle passive, and followed by the nominative. In the acclamations of the people on our Saviour's public entry into Jerusalem, the historian informs us, that they cried out, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the "Lord†." Instead of this, say, "He that cometh "in the name of the Lord is blessed;" and by this alteration in the order of the words, apparently trifling, you convert a fervid exclamation into a cold aphorism.

The third example shall be of an active verb, preceded by the accusative, and followed by the

* Gr. Μεγαλη ἡ Αρτεμις Εφεσιων. Lat. Vulg. Eraem. "Magna "Diana Ephesiorum." Castal. Beza, "Magna est Diana Ephesiorum." Ital. Diodati, "Grande è la Diana degli Efesii." How weak in comparison is the French version of Le Clerc? "La Diane des Ephesiens est une "grande déesse." How deficient that of Beausobre? "La grande Diane "des Ephesiens." How ridiculous that of Saci? "Vive la grande Diane "des Ephesiens."

† Matt. xxi. 9. Gr. Ευλογημενος ὁ ερχομενος ἐν ὀνοματι Κυριου. Lat. Vulg. Eras. Bez. "Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini." Cast. "Benè sit ei qui venit," &c. Ital. Diod. "Benedetto colui che viene nel "nome del Signore." Fr. Le Clerc, Beaus. Saci, "Beni soit celui qui vient "au nom du Seigneur."

nominative. It may be proper to observe by the way, that unless one of these is a pronoun, such an arrangement is scarcely admissible in our language. These cases in our nouns, not being distinguished by inflection, as they are in our pronouns, are solely ascertained by place. But to come to the proposed example, we are informed by the sacred historian, that when Peter and John ordered the cripple who sat begging at the beautiful gate of the temple, to look on them, he looked at them very earnestly, expecting to receive something from them. Then Peter said, "Silver and gold have I none, but such as "I have, give I thee; in the name of Jesus "Christ of Nazareth, arise and walk *." Here the wishful look and expectation of the beggar,

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* Acts iii. 6. Gr. Αργυριον και χρυσιον ουχ υπαρχει μοι· ὁ δε εχω, τυτο σοι διδωμι· Εν ονοματι Ιησυ Χριστυ τυ Ναζωραιυ εγειραι και περιπατει. Lat. Vul. Eras. Bez. "Argentum et aurum non est mihi; quod autem "habeo, hoc tibi do. In nomine Jesu Christi Nazareni, surge et ambula." Castaglio hath not adhered so closely to the order of the words in the original, but hath in this and some other places, for the sake of latinity, weakened the expression: "Nec argentum mihi nec aurum est; sed quod habeo, "hoc tibi do. In nomine," &c. It would seem that neither the Italian language nor the French can admit so great a latitude in arranging the words; for in these the vivacity resulting from the order is not only weakened but destroyed. Diod. "Io non ho ne argento ne oro; ma quel che "ho, io t'el dono: nel nome di Jesu Christo il Nazareo, levati e camina." Le Clerc, Beausobre, "Je n'ai ni or ni argent; mais ce que j'ai, je vous le "donne: au nom de Jesus Christ de Nazareth, levez-vous et marchez." Sacy's is the same, except in the last member, where, by transposing the words, "au nom de Jesus Christ de Nazareth," and putting them after

naturally leads to a vivid conception of that which was the object of his thoughts, and this conception as naturally displays itself in the very form of the declaration made by the apostle. But as every thing is best judged by comparison, let us contrast with this the same sentence arranged according to the rigid rules of grammar, which render it almost a literal translation of the Italian and French versions quoted in the margin, "I have no gold and silver; but I give thee "that which I have: In the name of—" The import is the same, but the expression is rendered quite exanimate. Yet the sentences differ chiefly in arrangement, the other difference in composition is inconsiderable.

There is another happy transposition in the English version of the passage under review, which, though peculiar to our version, deserves our notice, as it contributes not a little to the energy of the whole. I mean not only the separation of the adjective *none* from its substantives *silver* and *gold*, but the placing of it in the end of the clause, which, as it were, rests upon it. "Silver and gold have I *none*." For here, as in several other instances, the next place to the first, in respect of emphasis, is the last. We

"levez-vous," he hath altered the sense, and made that a circumstance attending the action of the lame man, which was intended to express the authority whereby the apostle gave the order.

shall be more sensible of this by making a very small alteration on the composition and structure of the sentence, and saying, "Silver and gold "are not in my possession;" which is manifestly weaker.

My fourth example should be one wherein the verb occupies the first place in the sentence, which often happens in the ancient languages with great advantage in point of vivacity. But this cannot frequently obtain in English, without occasioning an ambiguity; the first place when given to the verb, being, by the rules of our syntax, appropriated to distinguish these three things, a command, as "*Stay* not here;" a question, as "*Were* they present;" and a supposition, as "*Had* I known," from an assertion, as "*Ye* "*stay* not here;" "They *were* present;" and "I "*had* known." A few trifling phrases, as *said he*, *replied they*, are the sole exceptions in the simple tenses, at least in prose. In some instances, however, in the compound tenses, the verb may precede without giving rise to any double meaning. In such cases it is not the auxiliary or the substantive verb that begins the sentence, as in supposition and interrogation, but the infinitive of the principal verb in the active voice, and the participle in the passive, as in expressions like these, "*Go* I must, whatever may ensue." "*Avoid* "it he could not by any means." An instance in the passive voice hath been given in the second

example. I shall here observe, that in one passage of scripture our translators, by not attending to this small circumstance, that the import of the passive verb lies in the participle, have, without necessity, not only given up the emphatical arrangement, but, in order to be literal, have copied a figure, which, though forcible in the original, is, in the place assigned it in the translation, rather unnatural and insignificant. The passage alluded to is this, "Another angel "followed, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, "that great city *." Here, as it was the event itself that chiefly occupied the angel's mind, the verb in the Greek with great propriety begins the proclamation: Again, as it was an event of

* Rev. xiv. 8. Gr. Επεσεν, επεσεν Βαβυλων η πολις η μεγαλη. As the expression is taken from Isaiah xxi. 9. the same order is found in the Hebrew, נפלה נפלה כבל. All the Latin translations that I have seen, have followed the same order. "Cecidit, cecidit Babylon, urbs illa magna." Le Clerc and Sacy in the French, both agree with the arrangement in the English. "Babylone est tombée; elle est tombée; cette grande ville." Beausobre's version in that tongue is rather better, as it comes nearer the order of the words in the Greek. He begins with the pronoun, and puts the name after the verb. "Elle est tombée, elle est tombée, Babylone la "grande ville." This, I believe, is as near the original as the idiom of the French will permit. In the Italian, Diodati hath preserved entirely the vivacity resulting both from the disposition of the words, and the reduplication of the verb, and hath given the passage that turn which the English interpreters might and should have given it: "Caduta, caduta è Babilonia la "gran città." It is evident that in this matter the Italian allows more liberty than the French, and the English more than the Italian. The truth of this observation will appear more fully afterwards.

so surprising a nature, and of such mighty consequence, it was natural to attempt, by repeating the word, to rivet it in the minds of the hearers, ere he proceeded any further. The words *is fallen*, in our language, answer to the single word by which the verb is expressed in the original. Our translators were sensible they could not say, "*Is* "*fallen, is fallen*, Babylon that great city." This could convey no meaning, being neither affirmation nor interrogation, hypothesis nor wish. For this reason they have preferred the colder arrangement, prescribed by grammarians, though by so doing they have also lost the effect of the reduplication. A little attention to the genius of our tongue would have shewn them, that all the effect, both of the order and of the figure, would have been preserved by saying, "*Fallen, fallen*, "is Babylon the great city *."

Often a particle, such as an adverb or preposition belonging to a compound verb (for it matters not in which way you consider it), emphatically begins the sentence, as in that formerly quoted for another purpose. "*Up* goes my grave "Impudence to the maid." In the particle *up*,

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* Somewhat similar is the admirable example we have in this passage of Virgil,

Me, me, adsum qui feci, in me convertite ferrum. Æn. L. ix.

The emphasis here is even the stronger, that the pronoun so happily begun with and repeated is perfectly irregular, it being quite detached from the construction of the sentence.

that circumstance is denoted, which particularly marks the impudence of the action. By the help of it too, the verb is made to precede the nominative, which otherwise it could not do. In negations it holds very generally, that the negative particle should be joined to the verb. Yet in some cases the expression is greatly enlivened, and consequently the denial appears more determinate, by beginning the sentence with the adverb. "*Not* every one," says our Saviour, "that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall "enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that "doth the will of my father who is in heaven *." Vary but the position of the negative in the first member, and say, "Every one that saith unto "me, Lord, Lord, shall not enter into the king-"dom of heaven," and you will flatten the expression exceedingly. On so slight a circumstance in the arrangement does the energy of a sentence sometimes depend. We have some admirable examples of the power of this circumstance in Shakespeare. In the conference of

* Mat. vii. 21. Gr. Ου πας ο λεγων μοι, Κυριε Κυριε, εισελευσεται εις την βασιλειαν των ουρανων. All the Latin translators, however differently they express the sense, agree in beginning with the negative particle. So also doth Diodati in the Italian: "*Non* chiunque mi dice, Signore, Signore, "entrera nel regno de' cieli."—Not so the French. Le Clerc and Beausobre thus: "Tous ceux qui me disent, Seigneur, Seigneur, n'entreront pas dans "le royaume du ciel." Sacy thus, "Ceux qui me disent, Seigneur, Seigneur, "n'entreront pas tous dans le royaume des cieux."

Malcolm with Macduff; after the former had asserted, that he himself was so wicked, that even Macbeth, compared with him, would appear innocent as a lamb, Macduff replies with some warmth,

> ——*Not* in the legions
> Of horrid hell, can come a devil more damn'd,
> In ills to top Macbeth *.

The arrangement in this sentence is admirably adapted to the speaker's purpose; whereas, if you dispose the words in the usual manner, and say, "A more damned devil in the legions of horrid "hell cannot come to top Macbeth in ills;" we shall scarcely be persuaded that the thought is the same. If it were needful to multiply examples, I might easily show that other adverbs, particularly those of time and of place, when such circumstances require special notice, may, with great advantage to the energy, appear foremost in the sentence.

I proceed to observe, that when a sentence begins with a conjunction, whether it be expressed in one word or more, with naming or titling the persons addressed, with a call to attention, or even with a term that is little more than an expletive, the place immediately following such phrase, title, or connective, will often give the same advantage to the expression that fills it, as in other cases the

* Macbeth.

first place will do. The first term or phrase is considered only as the link which connects the sentence with that which went before; or, if it have no relation to the preceding, as an intimation that something is to be said. Of this a few examples will suffice. The place immediately after a conjunction which begins the sentence is sometimes emphatical, as in that of Milton:

> ——————At last *his sail-broad vans*
> He spreads for flight *;——

where the description is the more picturesque that the verb is preceded by its regimen. The possessive pronoun and the epithet, unless when a particular emphasis rests upon one of them, are regarded only as constituting parts of one complex sign with the noun. Secondly, the place after the address, as in that of the same author,

> Powers and dominions, deities of heaven!
> * * * * * * * *
> *Me*, tho' just right and the fixt laws of heaven
> Did first create your leader †,——

Nothing could better suit, or more vividly express, the pride and arrogance of the arch-apostate, than the manner here used of introducing himself to their notice. Thirdly, the place after a call to attention, as in that of the apostle "Be- "hold, *now* is the accepted time: behold, *now* is

* Paradise Lost, B. II. † Ibid.

"the day of salvation *." Lastly, the place after an expletive: "There *came* no more such abun-"dance of spices as these which the Queen of Sheba "gave to king Solomon †." Perhaps the word *there*, in this passage, cannot properly be termed an expletive; for though it be in itself insignificant, the idiom of the language renders it necessary in this disposition of the sentence; for such is the power of this particle, that by its means even the simple tenses of the verb can be made to precede the nominative, without the appearance of interrogation. For when we interrogate we must say, "Came there—" or "Did there "come—" A little attention will satisfy us, that the verb in the passage produced, ought to occupy the emphatical place, as the comparison is purely of what was brought into the country then, and what was at any time imported afterwards. Even though the particle *there* be preceded by the copulative, it will make no odds on the value of the place immediately following. "And there *appeared* to them, Elias, with Mo-"ses ‡." The apparition is here the striking circumstance. And the first place that is occupied by a significant term is still the emphatical place. In all the three preceding quotations from scripture, the arrangement is the same in the ori-

* 2 Cor. vi. 2. † 1 Kings x. 10.

‡ Mark ix. 4. Gr. Και ωφθη αυτοις Ηλιας συν Μωσει.

ginal, and in most of the ancient translations, as it is with us. The modern versions vary more, especially in regard to the passage last quoted *.

I shall add one example more from scripture, wherein the oblique case of the personal pronoun, though preceded by two conjunctions, emphatically ushers the verb and its nominative. *Among many nations there was no king like Solomon, who was beloved of his God, and God made him king over all Israel: nevertheless even him did outlandish women cause to sin* †. My remark concerns

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* In Italian, Diodati renders it, "Et Elia apparue loro, insieme "con Moise." In French, Le Clerc, "Ensuite Elie et Moïse leur "apparurent." Beausobre, "Ils virent aussi paroître Moïse et Elie." Saci, "Et ils virent paroître Elie et Moïse." It would seem that neither of these tongues can easily admit the simple tense to precede both its nominative and its regimen. By the aid of the particle *there*, this is done in English without ambiguity, and without violence to the idiom of the language.

† Neh. xiii. 26. The clause affected by this criticism stands thus in the original: גַּם אוֹתָהּ הֶחֱטִיאוּ הַנָּשִׁים הַנָּכְרִיּוֹת׃ The order is exactly the same in the Greek of the Septuagint: Καὶ τοῦτον ἐξέκλινεν αἱ γυναῖκες αἱ ἀλλόφυλαι: and nearly the same in the Latin Vulgat; "Et ipsum ergo duxerunt ad peccatum mulieres alieni"genæ." Junius is rather more literal. "Etiam ipsum ad peccan"dum induxerunt feminæ alienigenæ." Castalio, with at least equal energy, places the pronoun before the conjunction. "Eum quoque ad "peccandum mulieres perduxerunt extraneæ." In all these, as in the English translation, what is principally emphatical in the arrangement is preserved, the pronoun being the first among the significant terms. It is not so in Diodati's Italian version: "E pure le donne straniere "lo fuero peccare:" nor in Saci's French; "Et après cela neanmoins "des femmes etrangeres le firent tomber dans le peché." It is re-

only the last clause of the sentence. It is manifest that the emphasis here ought to rest on the *him*, who, from what immediately precedes, might have been thought proof against all the arts, even of female seduction. This clause, every body must perceive, would have been much more weakly expressed, had it been arranged thus: *Nevertheless outlandish women did cause even him to sin.*

Sometimes indeed it is necessary, in order to set an eminent object in the most conspicuous light, to depart a little from the ordinary mode of composition as well as of arrangement. The following is an example in this way: "Your fathers, "where are they? and the prophets, do they live "for ever*?" A colder writer would have satisfied himself with saying, "Where are your fathers? "and do the prophets live for ever." But who that has the least spark of imagination, sees not how languid the latter expression is, when compared with the former? The sentiment intended

markable, that though the ordinary grammatic rules, both of French and of Italian, place the pronoun governed before the governing verb, the reverse of which obtains in English, the latter language is more capable of accommodating itself to such an expressive disposition of the words, as has been now exemplified, than either of the former. The reason is, though these tongues make the oblique case of the pronoun generally precede the verb, they do not admit the nominative to intervene, but for the most part, except in asking a question, place it before both.

* Zech. i. 5.

to be conveyed in both, namely the frailty and mortality of man, is one of those obvious truths, which it is impossible for any person in his senses to call in question. To introduce the mention of it, in order to engage my assent to what nobody ever denied or doubted, would be of no consequence at all; but it is of consequence to rouse my attention to a truth, which so nearly concerns every man, and which is, nevertheless, so little attended to by any. In such cases the end of speaking is not to make us *believe*, but to make us *feel*. It is the heart and not the head which ought to be addressed. And nothing can be better adapted to this purpose, than first, as it were independently, to raise clear ideas in the imagination, and then, by the abruptness of an unexpected question, to send us to seek for the archetypes.

From all the examples above quoted, those especially taken from holy writ, the learned reader, after comparing them carefully, both with the original, and with the translations cited in the margin, will be enabled to deduce, with as much certainty as the nature of the question admits, that that arrangement which I call rhetorical, as contributing to vivacity and animation, is, in the strictest sense of the word, agreeably to what hath been already suggested, a natural arrangement; that the principle which leads to it operates similarly on every people, and in every

language, though it is much more checked by the idiom of some tongues than by that of others; that, on the contrary, the more common, and what for distinction's sake I call the grammatical order, is, in a great measure, an arrangement of convention, and differs considerably in different languages *. He will discover also, that to render the artificial or conventional arrangement, as it were, sacred and inviolable, by representing every deviation (whatever be the subject, whatever be the design of the work) as a trespass against the laws of composition in the language, is one of the most effectual ways of stinting the powers of elocution, and even of damping the vigour both of imagination and of passion. I

* All the French critics are not so immoderately national as Bouhours. Since composing the foregoing observations, I have been shown a book, entitled, *Traité de la formation mechanique des langues*. The sentiments of the author on this subject are entirely coincident with mine. He refers to some other treatises, particularly to one on Inversion, by M. de Batteux, which I have not seen. Concerning it he says, "Ceux qui l'auront lu, verront que c'est le défaut de terminaisons "propres à distinguer le nominatif de l'accusatif, qui nous a forcé à "prendre cet ordre moins naturel qu'on ne le croit: que l'inversion est "dans nôtre langue, non dans la langue latine, comme on se le figure: "que les mots étant plus faits pour l'homme que pour les choses, l'or"dre essentiel à suivre dans le discours representatif de l'idée des objets "n'est pas tant la marche commune des choses dans la nature, que la "succession véritable des pensées, la rapidité des sentimens, ou de l'inté"rêt du cœur, la fidélité de l'image dans le tableau de l'action: que le "latin en préférant ces points capitaux procede plus naturellement que le "françois," &c. No. 22.

observe this the rather, that in my apprehension, the criticism that prevails amongst us at present leans too much this way. No man is more sensible of the excellence of purity and perspicuity, properly so called; but I would not hastily give up some not inconsiderable advantages of the English tongue, in respect both of eloquence and of poetry, merely in exchange for the French *netteté*.

I should next proceed to make some remarks on the disposition and the form of the clauses in complex sentences; for though some of the examples already produced are properly complex, in these I have only considered the arrangement of the words in the principal member, and not the disposition of the members. But before I enter on this other discussion, it will be proper to observe, and by some suitable examples to illustrate the observation, that the complex are not so favourable to a vivacious diction as the simple sentences, or such as consist of two clauses at the most.

Of all the parts of speech, the conjunctions are the most unfriendly to vivacity; and next to them the relative pronouns, as partaking of the nature of conjunction. It is by these parts, less significant in themselves, that the more significant parts, particularly the members of complex sentences, are knit together. The frequent recurrence, therefore, of such feeble supplements, cannot fail to prove tiresome, especially in pieces wherein an en-

livened and animated diction might naturally be expected. But nowhere hath simplicity in the expression a better effect in invigorating the sentiments, than in poetical description on interesting subjects. Consider the song composed by Moses, on occasion of the passage of the Israelites through the Red Sea, and you will find, that part of the effect produced by that noble hymn is justly imputable to the simple, the abrupt, the rapid manner adopted in the composition. I shall produce only two verses for a specimen. "The enemy said, I will pursue; I will "overtake: I will divide the spoil; my revenge "shall be satiated upon them: I will draw my "sword; my hand shall destroy them: thou "blewest with thy breath; the sea covered "them; they sank as lead in the mighty wa-"ters *." This is the figure which the Greek rhetoricians call asyndeton, and to which they ascribe

* Exod. xv. 9. 10. The word by our interpreters rendered *wind* also denotes *spirit* and *breath*. A similar homonymy, in the corresponding term, may be observed not only in the oriental, but in almost all ancient languages. When this noun has the affixed pronoun, by which it is appropriated to a person, the signification *wind* is evidently excluded, and the meaning is limited to either *spirit* or *breath*. When it is, besides, construed with the verb *blow*, the signification *spirit* is also excluded, and the meaning confined to *breath*. It is likewise the intention of the inspired penman, to represent the wonderful facility with which Jehovah blasted all the towering hopes of the Egyptians. Add to this, that such a manner is entirely in the Hebrew taste, which considers every great natural object as bearing some relation to the Creator and Sovereign of the universe. The thunder is God's voice; the wind, his breath; the heaven, his throne; the earth, his footstool; the whirlwind and the tempest are the blasts of his nostrils.

a wonderful efficacy. It ought to be observed, that the natural connection of the particulars mentioned is both close and manifest; and it is this consideration which entirely supersedes the artificial signs of that connection, such as conjunctions and relatives. Our translators (who, it must be acknowledged, are not often chargeable with this fault) have injured one passage in endeavouring to mend it. Literally rendered it stands thus: "Thou "sentest forth thy wrath; it consumed them as "stubble*." These two simple sentences have appeared to them too much detached. For this reason, they have injudiciously combined them into one complex sentence, by inserting the relative *which*, and thereby weakened the expression: "Thou sentest forth thy wrath, which consumed "them as stubble." They have also thought fit sometimes to add the conjunction *and* when it was not necessary, and might well have been spared.

If any one perceives not the difference, and, consequently, is not satisfied of the truth of this doctrine, let him make the following experiment on the song now under review. Let him transcribe it by himself, carefully inserting conjunctions and relatives in every place which will admit them in a consistency with the sense, and then let him try the effect of the whole. If, after all, he is not convinced, I know no argument in nature

* Exod. xv. 7.

that can weigh with him. For this is one of those cases in which the decision of every man's own taste must be final with regard to himself.

But those who feel the difference in the effects, will permit such as are so disposed to speculate a little about the cause. All that comes under the cognizance of our senses, in the operations either of Nature or of Art, is the causes which precede, and the effects which follow. Hence is suggested to the mind the notion of power, agency, or causation. This notion or idea (call it which you please) is from the very frame of our nature suggested, necessarily suggested, and often instantaneously suggested; but still it is suggested and not perceived. I would not choose to dispute with any man about a word, and, therefore, lest this expression should appear exceptionable, I declare my meaning to be only this, that it is *conceived* by the understanding, and not *perceived* by the senses, as the causes and the effects themselves often are. Would you then copy Nature in a historical or descriptive poem, present to our imaginations the causes and the effects in their natural order; the suggestion of the power or agency which connects them will as necessarily result from the lively image you produce in the fancy, as it results from the perception of the things themselves, when they fall under the cognizance of the senses.

But if you should take the other method, and connect with accuracy where there is relation; and with the help of conjunctions and relatives, deduce with care effects from their causes, and allow nothing of the kind to pass unnoticed in the description, in lieu of a picture, you will present us with a piece of reasoning or declamation. Would you, on the contrary, give to reasoning itself the force and vivacity of painting, follow the method first prescribed, and that even when you represent the energy of spiritual causes, which were never subjected to the scrutiny of sense. You will thus convert a piece of abstruse reflection, which, however just, makes but a slender impression upon the mind, into the most affecting and instructive imagery.

It is in this manner the psalmist treats that most sublime, and, at the same time, most abstract of all subjects, the providence of God. With what success he treats it, every person of taste and sensibility will judge. After a few strictures on the life of man, and of the inferior animals, to whatever element, air, or earth, or water, they belong, he thus breaks forth: "These wait all upon thee, that thou mayest "give them their meat in due season. Thou "givest them. They gather. Thou openest thy "hand. They are filled with good. Thou "hidest thy face. They are troubled. Thou "takest away their breath. They die, and re-

"turn to their dust. Thou sendest forth thy "Spirit. They are created. Thou renewest the "face of the earth *." It must be acknowledged, that it is not every subject, no, nor every kind of composition, that requires, or even admits the use of such glowing colours. The psalm is of the nature of the ode, being, properly defined, a sacred ode; and it is allowed, that this species of poesy demands more fire than any other.

It may indeed be thought, that the vivacity resulting from this manner of composing is sufficiently accounted for, from the brevity which it occasions, and of which I treated in the preceding chapter. It is an undoubted truth, that the brevity here contributes to the force of the expression, but it is not solely to this principle that the effect is to be ascribed. A good taste will discern a difference in a passage already quoted from the song of Moses, as it stands in our version, and as it is literally rendered from the Hebrew †; though in both, the number of words, and even of syllables, is the same. Observe also, the expression of the psalmist, who having compared man, in respect of duration, to a flower, says concerning the latter, "The wind passeth "over it, and it is gone ‡." Had he said, "The "wind passing over it, destroys it," he had ex-

* Psalms civ. 27—30. † Exod. xv. 7. ‡ Psalms ciii. 16.

pressed the same sentiment in fewer words, but more weakly.

But it may be objected, If such is the power of the figure asyndeton, and if the conjunctive particles are naturally the weakest parts in a sentence, whence comes it that the figure polysyndeton, the reverse of the former, should be productive of that energy which rhetoricians ascribe to it? I answer, the cases must be very different which require such opposite methods. Celerity of operation, and fervour in narration, are best expressed by the first. A deliberate attention to every circumstance, as being of importance, and to this in particular the multiplicity of the circumstances, is best awakened by the second. The conjunctions and relatives excluded by the asyndeton are such as connect clauses and members; those repeated by the polysyndeton are such as connect single words only. All collectives alike are set aside by the former; the latter is confined to copulatives and disjunctives. A few examples of this will illustrate the difference. "While the "earth remaineth," said God immediately after the deluge, "seedtime, and harvest, and cold, and "heat, and summer, and winter, and day, and "night shall not cease*." Every thing to which a permanency of so great importance is secured, requires the most deliberate attention. And in

* Gen. viii. 22.

the following declaration of the apostle, much additional weight and distinctness are given to each particular, by the repetition of the conjunction. "I am persuaded, that neither death, nor "life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, "nor things present, nor things to come, nor "height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall "be able to separate us from the love of God *."

Section III.

Complex sentences.

Part I.—*Subdivision of these into periods and loose sentences.*

I come now to the consideration of complex sentences. These are of two kinds. They are either periods, or sentences of a looser composition, for which the language doth not furnish us with a particular name. A period is a complex sentence, wherein the meaning remains suspended, till the whole is finished. The connection consequently is so close between the beginning and the end, as to give rise to the name *period*, which signifies circuit. The following is such a sentence: "Corruption could not spread with so

* Rom. viii. 38, 39.

"much success, though reduced into system, and "though some ministers, with equal impudence "and folly, avowed it by themselves and their "advocates, to be the principal expedient by "which they governed; if a long and almost "unobserved progression of causes and effects "did not prepare the conjuncture*." The criterion of a period is this: If you stop any where before the end, the preceding words will not form a sentence, and therefore cannot convey any determined sense. This is plainly the case with the above example. The first verb being *could* and not *can*, the potential and not the indicative mood, shows that the sentence is hypothetical, and requires to its completion, some clause beginning with *if*, *unless*, or some other conditional particle. And after you are come to the conjunction, you find no part where you can stop before the end†. From this account of

* Boling. Spirit of Patriotism.

† It is surprising that most modern critics seem to have mistaken totally the import of the word *period*, confounding it with the complex sentence in general, and sometimes even with the simple but circumstantiated sentence. Though none of the ancients, as far as I remember, either Greek or Latin, have treated this matter with all the precision that might be wished, yet it appears to me evident, from the expressions they employ, the similitudes they use, and the examples they produce, that the distinction given above perfectly coincides with their notions on this subject. But nothing seems more decisive than the instance which Demetrius Phalareus has given of a period from Demosthenes, and which, for the

the nature of a period, we may justly infer, that it was much easier in Greek and Latin to write in periods than it is in English or perhaps in any European tongue. The construction with them depended mostly on inflection; conse-

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sake of illustrating the difference, he has also thrown into the form of a loose sentence. I refer the learned reader to the book itself: Περὶ ἑρμηνείας I. IA. The ancients did indeed sometimes apply the word Period to simple but circumstantiated sentences of a certain structure. I shall give the following example in our own language for an illustration: "At last, "after much fatigue, through deep roads and bad weather, we came with "no small difficulty to our journey's end." Otherwise thus, "We came "to our journey's *end* at *last*, with no small *difficulty*, after much *fatigue*, "through deep *roads*, and bad weather." The latter is in the loose, the former in the periodic composition. Accordingly in the latter there are, before the conclusion, no less than five words, which I have distinguished by the character, namely, *end*, *last*, *difficulty*, *fatigue*, *roads*, with any of which the sentence might have terminated. One would not have expected that a writer so accurate and knowing as M. du Marsais, should have so far mistaken the meaning of the word *period* in the usage of the ancients, as to define it in this manner: *La période est un assemblage de propositions liées entr' elles par des conjonctions, et qui toutes ensemble font un sens fini.* "The period is an assemblage of propositions connected by conjunctions, "and making altogether one complete sense." (Principes de Grammaire, La Periode.) This is a proper definition of a complex sentence; and that he meant no more is manifest from all his subsequent illustrations. Take the following for an example, which he gives in another place of the same work: "*Il y a un avantage réel à être instruit; mais il ne faut pas que cet avan-*"*tage inspire de l'orgueil.*" "There is a real advantage in being instruct-"ed; but we ought not to be proud of this advantage." He adds, "Le "*mais* raproche les deux propositions ou membres de la periode, et les met "en opposition." "The *but* connects the two propositions or members of "the period, and sets them in opposition." Des conjonctions. It is evident that the sentence adduced is no period in the sense of the ancients.

quently the arrangement, which ascertains the character of the sentence in respect of composition, was very much in their own power; with us, on the contrary, the construction depends mostly on arrangement, which is therefore comparatively very little in our power. Accordingly, as the sense in every sentence hangs entirely on the verb, one ordinary way with them of keeping the sense suspended, was by reserving the verb to the end. This in most cases the structure of modern languages will not permit us to imitate. An example of a complex sentence, that is not a period, I shall produce from the same performance. "One party had given their whole "attention, during several years, to the project "of enriching *themselves*, and impoverishing the "rest of the *nation*; and by these and other "means, of establishing their *dominion*, under the "*government*, and with the favour of a family "who were *foreigners*, and therefore might be-"lieve that they were established on the throne, "by the good will and strength of this party "alone." The criterion of such loose sentences is as follows: There will always be found in them one place at least before the end, at which if you make a stop, the construction of the preceding part will render it a complete sentence. Thus in the example now given, whether you stop at the word *themselves*, at *nation*, at *dominion*, at *government*, or at *foreigners*, all which words are mark-

ed in the quotation in italics, you will find you have read a perfect sentence.

Wherefore then, it may be asked, is this denominated one sentence, and not several? For this reason, that though the preceding words, when you have reached any of the stops above mentioned, will make sense, and may be construed separately, the same cannot be said of the words which follow. In a period, the dependence of the members is reciprocal; in a loose sentence the former members have not a necessary dependence on the latter, whereas the latter depend entirely on the former. Indeed, if both former and latter members are, in respect of construction, alike independent on one another, they do not constitute one sentence, but two or more. And here I shall remark by the way, that it is by applying the observation just now made, and not always by the pointing, even where the laws of punctuation are most strictly observed, that we can discriminate sentences. When they are closely related in respect of sense, and when the sentences themselves are simple, they are for the most part separated only by commas or by semicolons, rarely by colons, and almost never by points. In this way the passages above quoted from the song of Moses and the Psalms, are pointed in all our English Bibles.

But there is an intermediate sort of sentences which must not be altogether overlooked, though

they are neither entirely loose, nor perfect periods. Of this sort is the following: "The other insti- "tution," he is speaking of the eucharist, "has "been so disguised by ornament, || and so much "directed in your church at least, to a different "purpose from commemoration, that if the "disciples were to assemble at Easter in the "chapel of his Holiness, Peter would know "his successor as little, || as Christ would ac- "knowledge his *vicar;* and the rest would "be unable to guess || what the ceremony *repre-* "*sented* || or intended *." This sentence may be distributed into four members. The first is complex, including two clauses, and ends at *commemoration.* The second is simple, ending at *Holiness.* It is evident that the sentence could not terminate at either of these places, or at any of the intermediate words. The third member is subdivided into two clauses, and ends at *vicar.* It is equally evident that if the sentence had been concluded here, there would have been no defect in the construction. The fourth member, which concludes the sentence, is also compound, and admits a subdivision into three clauses. At the word *represented,* which finishes the second clause, the sentence might have terminated. The two words which could have admitted a full stop after them, are distinguished by italics.

* Bol. Phil. Es. iv. Sect. 7.

Care hath also been taken to discriminate the members and the clauses. It may, however, justly be affirmed, that when the additional clause or clauses are, as in the preceding example, intimately connected with the foregoing words, the sentence, may still be considered as a period, since it hath much the same effect. Perhaps some of the examples of periods to be produced in the sequel, if examined very critically, would fall under this denomination. But that is of little or no consequence.

On comparing the two kinds of complex sentences together, to wit, the period and the loose sentence, we find that each hath its advantages and disadvantages. The former savours more of artifice and design, the latter seems more the result of pure Nature. The period is nevertheless more susceptible of vivacity and force; the loose sentence is apt, as it were, to languish, and grow tiresome. The first is more adapted to the style of the writer, the second to that of the speaker. But as that style is best, whether written or spoken, which hath a proper mixture of both; so there are some things in every species of discourse, which require a looser, and some which require a preciser manner. In general, the use of periods best suits the dignity of the historian, the political writer, and the philosopher. The other manner more befits the facility which ought to predominate in essays, dialogues, familiar letters, and

moral tales. These approach nearer the style of conversation, into which periods can very rarely find admittance. In some kinds of discourses intended to be pronounced, but not delivered to the Public in writing, they may properly find a place in the exordium and narration, for thus far some allowance is made for preparation; but are not so seasonable, unless very short, in the argumentative part, and the pathetic.

PART II.—*Observations on periods, and on the use of antithesis in the composition of sentences.*

I now proceed to offer some observations on the period. It hath been affirmed to have more energy than a sentence loosely composed. The reason is this: The strength which is diffused through the latter, is in the former collected, as it were, into a single point. You defer the blow a little, but it is solely that you may bring it down with greater weight. But in order to avoid obscurity, as well as the display of art, rhetoricians have generally prescribed that a period should not consist of more than four members. For my own part, as members of sentences differ exceedingly both in length and in structure from one another, I do not see how any general rule can be established, to ascertain their number. A period consisting of but two members, may easily be found, that is at once longer, more artificial and more obscure, than another consisting

of five. The only rule which will never fail, is to beware both of prolixity and of intricacy, and the only competent judges in the case are, good sense and a good ear.

A great deal hath been said both by ancient critics and by modern, on the formation and turn of periods. But their remarks are chiefly calculated with a view to harmony. In order to prevent the necessity of repeating afterwards, I shall take no notice of these remarks at present, though the rules founded on them do also in a certain degree contribute both to perspicuity and to strength.

That kind of period which hath most vivacity, is commonly that wherein you find an antithesis in the members, the several parts of one having a similarity to those of the other, adapted to some resemblance in the sense. The effect produced by the corresponding members in such a sentence, is like that produced in a picture where the figures of the group are not all on a side, with their faces turned the same way, but are made to contrast each other by their several positions. Besides, this kind of periods is generally the most perspicuous. There is in them not only that original light, which results from the expression when suitable, but there is also that which is reflected reciprocally from the opposed members. The relation between these is so strongly marked, that it is next to impossible to

lose sight of it. The same quality makes them also easier for the memory.

Yet to counterbalance these advantages, this sort of period often appears more artful and studied than any other. I say *often*, because nothing can be more evident, than that this is not always the case. Some antitheses seem to arise so naturally out of the subject, that it is scarcely possible in another manner to express the sentiment. Accordingly we discover them even in the scriptures, the style of which is perhaps the most artless, the most natural, the most unaffected, that is to be found in any composition now extant.

But I shall satisfy myself with producing a few specimens of this figure, mostly taken from the noble author lately quoted, who is commonly very successful in applying it. "If Cato," says he, "may be censured, severely indeed but "justly, || for abandoning the cause of liberty, || "which he would not however survive; . . "what shall we say of those, || who embrace it "faintly, || pursue it irresolutely, . . grow "tired of it, || when they have much to hope, . " . and give it up, || when they have nothing "to fear*?" In this period there is a double antithesis, the two clauses which follow the pronoun *those* are contrasted, so are also the two members (each consisting of two clauses) which

* On the Spirit of Patriotism.

conclude the sentence. Another specimen of a double antithesis differently disposed, in which he hath not been so fortunate, I shall produce from the same work. "Eloquence that leads "mankind by the ears, | gives a nobler superiori- "ty | than power that every dunce may use, " | or fraud that every knave may employ, | to "lead them by the nose." Here the two intermediate clauses are contrasted, so are also the first and the last. But there is this difference. In the intermediate members, there is a justness in the thought as well as in the expression, an essential requisite in this figure. In the other two members the antithesis is merely verbal; and is therefore at best but a trifling play upon the words. We see the connection which eloquence has with the ears, but it would puzzle Oedipus himself to discover the connection which either power or fraud has with the nose. The author, to make out the contrast, is in this instance obliged to betake himself to low and senseless cant.

Sometimes, though rarely, the antithesis affects three several clauses. In this case the clauses ought to be very short, that the artifice may not be too apparent. Sometimes too, the antithesis is not in the different members of the same sentence, but in different sentences. Both the last observations are exemplified in the following quotation from the same performance: "He can bribe, ‖ but he cannot se-

"duce. He can buy, || but he cannot gain. He "can lie, || but he cannot deceive." There is likewise in each sentence a little of antithesis between the very short clauses themselves.

Neither is this figure entirely confined to periods. Sentences of looser composition admit it; but the difference here is the less observable, that an antithesis well conducted, produces the effect of a period, by preventing the languor which invariably attends a loose sentence, if it happen to be long. The following is an instance of antithesis in such a sentence: "No man is able to "make a juster application of what hath been "here *advanced*, to the most important interests "of your *country*, to the true interest of your roy- "al master, and to your private interest *too;* if that "will add, as I presume it will, some weight to "the *scale;* and if that requires, as I presume it "does, a regard to futurity as well as to the pre- "sent moment*." That this is a loose sentence a little attention will satisfy every reader. I have marked the words in italics, at which, without violating the rules of grammar, it might have terminated. I acknowledge, however, that the marks of art are rather too visible in the composition.

Sometimes an antithesis is happily carried through two or three sentences; where the sen-

* Dedication to the Dissertation on Parties.

tences are not contrasted with one another, as in the example already given, but where the same words are contrasted in the different members of each sentence somewhat differently. Such an antithesis on the words *men*, *angels*, and *gods*, you have in the two following couplets:

> Pride still is aiming at the blest abodes;
> MEN would be ANGELS, || ANGELS would be GODS.
> Aspiring to be GODS, || if ANGELS fell;—
> Aspiring to be ANGELS, || MEN rebel *.

The like varied opposition in the words *principles*, *means*, and *ends*, may be observed in the two following sentences: "They are designed to assert "and vindicate the honour of the Revolution; "of the principles established, of the means em- "ployed, and of the ends obtained by it. They "are designed to explode our former distinc- "tions, and to unite men of all denominations, "in the support of these principles, in the de- "fence of these means, and in the pursuit of "these ends †." You have in the subsequent quotation an antithesis on the words *true* and *just*, which runs through three successive sentences. "The anecdotes here related were true, "and the reflections made upon them were just "many years ago. The former would not have "been related, if he who related them, had not "known them to be true; nor the latter have.

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* Essay on Man.

† Dedication of the Dissertation on Parties.

"been made, if he who made them had not "thought them just: And if they were true and "just then, they must be true and just now, and "always *."

Sometimes the words contrasted in the second clause are mostly the same that are used in the first, only the construction and the arrangement are inverted, as in this passage, "The old may "inform the young; || and the young may ani- "mate the old †." In Greek and Latin this kind of antithesis generally receives an additional beauty from the change made in the inflection, which is necessary in those ancient languages for ascertaining what in modern tongues is ascertained solely by the arrangement ‡. This obtains sometimes, but more rarely, in our own language, as in these lines of Pope,

* Advertisement to the Letters on Patriotism.

† Dedication of the Dissertation on Parties.

‡ An instance of this is that given by Quint. l. ix. c. 3. "Non ut edam "vivo, sed ut vivam edo." A literal translation into English, "I do not "live that I may eat, but I eat that I may live," preserves the antithesis, but neither the vivacity nor the force of the original. The want of inflection is one reason of the inferiority, but not the only reason. It weakens the expression that we must employ fifteen words, for what is expressed in Latin with equal perspicuity in eight. Perhaps it would be better rendered, though not so explicitly, "I do not live to eat, but I eat to live." Another example in point is the noted epigram of Ausonius,

Infelix Dido, nulli benè nupta marito:
Hoc pereunte, fugis; hoc fugiente, peris.

But though it is chiefly in this sort which the ancients called ἀντιμεταβολὴν

Whate'er of mungrel no one class admits,
A wit with dunces, || and a dunce with wits *.

Something pretty similar is also to be remarked, when the words in the contrasted members remain the same under different inflections, the construction varied but not inverted. And this is the last variety of the antithesis that I shall specify; for to enumerate them all would be impossible. You have an example of this kind of contrast in the last line of the following couplet,

Leave such to trifle with more grace and ease,
Whom folly pleases, || and—whose follies please †.

I shall now consider both what the merit of the antithesis is, and to what kind of composition it is best adapted. It hath been remarked already, and cannot be justly questioned, that it often contributes both to vivacity and to perspicuity; on the other hand, it hath been charged with bearing the manifest signatures both of artifice

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that the advantage of varied inflections appears, it is not in this sort only. In all antitheses without exception, the similar endings of the contrasted words add both light and energy to the expression. Nothing can better illustrate this than the compliment paid to Cæsar by Cicero, in his pleading for Ligarius——"Nihil habet nec fortuna tua majus quam ut possis, nec natura tua "melius quam ut velis, conservare quam plurimos." This perhaps would appear to us rather too artificial. But this appearance ariseth merely from the different structure of modern languages. What would in most cases be impossible to us, the genius of their tongue rendered not only easy to them, but almost unavoidable.

* Dunciad, B. IV.

† Pope's Imitations of Horace, B. II. Ep. ii.

and of puerility; of artifice, because of the nice adjustment of the correspondent clauses; of puerility, because of the supposed insignificance of the task of balancing words and syllables. The latter of these charges results so entirely from the former, that an answer to one is an answer to both. It is solely the appearance of artifice that conveys the notion of a task, and thereby gives rise to the charge of childishness. If therefore in any instance an antithesis cannot be reckoned artificial, it will not, at least on account of the expression, be deemed puerile.

It was remarked, when I entered on the consideration of this figure, that it sometimes ariseth so naturally from the subject, as to appear inevitable. This particularly is the case where a comparison is either directly made, or only hinted. Samuel, we are told, said to Agag, immediately before he killed him, "As thy sword hath made "women childless; so shall thy mother be child-"less among women *." The sentiment here expressed, namely that the treatment which the tyrant was to receive, was due to him by the law of retaliation, rendered some antithesis in the words scarcely avoidable. Yet the antithesis in this passage is more in the thought than in the expression; as the words in the contrasted clauses

* 1 Sam. xv. 33.

are not opposed to each other with that nicety which many authors would have employed.

But though accuracy of opposition may on some occasions have a very good effect, this will never be the case, where it gives rise to any thing that appears forced in the construction, unnatural in the arrangement, or unharmonious in the cadence. Nature, ease, and fluency, are first to be regarded. In the two following examples you have precision in the contrast, without the appearance of too much art in the expression. "Beware of the ides of March, said the Roman "augur to Julius Cesar. Beware of the month "of May, says the British Spectator to his fair "countrywomen." Again, "I must observe, that "as in some climates there is a perpetual spring, "so in some female constitutions there is a per-"petual May *." In either instance, if the comparison itself escape censure, the expression will be pronounced faultless. An antithesis therefore doth not always necessarily imply art, and if in some instances it doth to a certain degree imply art, it ought to be remembered, that there are some kinds of composition, which not only admit, but even require, a more elaborate diction than other kinds; and that in every kind of composition there are some parts wherein even the display of art is more allowable than in other parts.

* Spectator, No. 395. X.

The observations with regard to the proper subjects for periods, will very nearly answer here, and therefore need not be repeated.

The antithesis, it is thought, is particularly unfavourable to persuasion, and therefore quite unfit for the more vehement and argumentative parts of a discourse. This is true of some sorts of antithesis (for they differ greatly in their nature), but it is not true of all. It is true of such as are sometimes found in long and complicated sentences. But it is not true of those which sentences of a less compound nature may admit. The enthymeme itself, the common syllogism of orators, is often successfully cast into this mould. Demetrius Phalereus, in his treatise of elocution, hath given us an example of this, from one of the most eloquent orations of Demosthenes against his famous rival. The example translated into English equally suits our present purpose. "For as, if any of those had then been condemn-"ed, ‖ you would not now have transgressed; "so if you should now be condemned, ‖ others "will not hereafter transgress *." The sentence is besides a perfect period, consisting of two members, each of which is subdivided into two clauses. I shall give the same argument with as little ap-

* Περι Ἑρμ. ΛΑ. Ωσπερ γαρ ειτις εκεινων ἑαλω, συ τα δ' ουκ αν εγραψας· ουτως αν συ νυν ἁλως αλλος ου γραψει.

parent antithesis as possible, by imitating the attempt which Demetrius hath made to express the sense in a looser manner. "Do not overlook "this transgression of your laws; for if such "transgressors were punished, this man would "not now have acted as he hath done; nor will "another do so afterwards, if he should be con-"demned on this occasion *." The argument is the same, though much less forcibly, and even less naturally expressed. But if the enthymeme is often cast into the form of antithesis, we may say of the dilemma, a species of argument in like manner frequent with orators, that it is hardly susceptible of another form, as in that given by Cicero: "If he is a bad man, why do you asso-"ciate with him? if he is a good man, why do "you accuse him †?" Nor are these the only sorts of argument that may be used in this manner. There is hardly any which may not in some cases derive both light and energy from this figure. What can be more cogently urged, or better adapted for silencing contradiction, than the answer which Balaam gave Balak, who

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* Ibid. Μη επιτρεπῆς τοις τα παρανομα γραφουσιν· ει γαρ εκωλυοντο, ουκ αν νυν ουτος ταυτα ἐγραψεν· οὐδ' ἑτερος ετι γραψει, τουτου νυν ἁλωντος.

† De inventione, lib. i. As the antithesis in the words is more perfect, and the expression more simple in the Latin, than it is possible to render them in a translation into any modern tongue; so the argument itself appears more forcible, "Si improbus est, cur uteris; sin probus, cur accusas?"

used various expedients to induce him to turn the blessing he had pronounced on Israel into a curse. Yet the prophet's reply runs wholly in antithesis. "God is not a man, || that he should lie; . . "neither the son of man, || that he should repent. "Hath he said, || and shall he not do it? . . or "hath he spoken, || and shall he not make it "good *?" In the same antithetic form the Psalmist disposeth his argument in support of the Divine knowledge. "He that planted the ear, || "shall he not hear? He that formed the eye, || "shall he not see †?" He argues from the effect to the cause, the only way in which we can argue intelligibly concerning the Divine attributes. But it would not be easy, I imagine, to give in so few words, either a more perspicuous or a more persuasive turn to the reasoning. It is not then every kind of antithesis that either savours of artifice, or is unsuited to persuasion.

One thing to which it seems agreed on all sides that this figure is particularly adapted, is the drawing of characters. You hardly now meet with a character either in prose or in verse, that is not wholly delineated in antithesis. This usage is perhaps excessive. Yet the fitness of the manner can scarcely be questioned, when one considers that the contrasted features in this moral

* Numb. xxiii. 19. † Psalm xciv. 9.

painting serve to ascertain the direction and boundaries of one another with greater precision than could otherwise be accomplished. It is too nice a matter, without the aid of this artifice, for even the most copious and expressive language. For a specimen in this way take these lines of Pope:

> Should such a man, too fond to rule alone,
> Bear, like the Turk, no brother near the throne,
> View him with scornful, yet with jealous eyes,
> And hate for arts that caus'd himself to rise;
> Damn with faint praise, || assent with civil leer,
> And without sneering, teach the rest to sneer;
> Willing to wound, || and yet—afraid to strike,
> Just hint a fault, || and—hesitate dislike;
> Alike reserv'd to blame, or to commend,
> A tim'rous foe, || and—a suspicious friend;
> Dreading ev'n fools, || by flatterers besieged,
> And so obliging, || that he ne'er obliged *.

With what a masterly hand are the colours in this picture blended; and how admirably do the different traits thus opposed, serve, as it were, to touch up and shade one another! I would not be understood by this to signify my opinion of its likeness to the original. I should be sorry to think that it deserves this praise. The poet had received, or fancied he had received, great provocation. And perfect impartiality in one under the influence of resentment, is more than can be expected from human nature. I only speak of

* Prologue to the Satires.

the character here exhibited, as one, who speaking of a portrait, without knowing the person for whom it was drawn, says it is well painted, and that there is both life and expression in the countenance.

If there be any style of composition which excludes antithesis altogether (for I am not positive that there is), it is the pathetic. But the true reason which hath induced some critics immoderately to decry this figure is, that some authors are disposed immoderately to employ it. One extreme naturally drives those who perceive the error, to the opposite extreme. It rarely leaves them, even though persons of good sense and critical discernment, precisely where they were before. Such is the repulsive power of jarring tastes. Nay, there is a kind of mode, which in these, as well as in other matters, often influences our censures without our knowing it. It is this which sometimes leads us to condemn as critics, what as authors we ourselves practise. Witness the following reproach from the author just now quoted.

> I see a chief who leads my chosen sons,
> All arm'd with points, antitheses and puns *.

On the other hand, it is certain, that the more agreeable the apposite and temperate use of this fi-

* Dunciad.

gure is, the more offensive is the abuse, or, which is nearly the same, the immoderate use of it. When used moderately, the appearance of art, which it might otherwise have, is veiled, partly by the energy of the expression, which doth not permit the hearer at first to attend critically to the composition, and partly by the simplicity, or at least the more artless structure, both of the preceding sentences and of the following. But if a discourse run in a continued string of antithesis, it is impossible the hearer should not become sensible of this particularity. The art is in that case quite naked. Then indeed the frequency of the figure renders it insipid, the sameness tiresome, and the artifice unsufferable.

The only original qualities of style which are excluded from no part of a performance, nay, which ought, on the contrary, to pervade the whole, are purity and perspicuity. The others are suited merely to particular subjects and occasions. And if this be true of the qualities themselves, it must certainly be true of the tropes and figures which are subservient to these qualities. In the art of cookery, those spiceries which give the highest relish must be used the most sparingly. Who then could endure a dish, wherein these were the only ingredients? There is no trope or figure that is not capable of a good effect. I do not except those which are reckoned of the lowest value, alliteration, paronomasia, or even pun. But

then the effect depends entirely on the circumstances. If these are not properly adjusted, it is always different from what it was intended to be, and often the reverse.

The antithesis in particular gives a kind of lustre and emphasis to the expression. It is the conviction of this that hath rendered some writers intemperate in the use of it. But the excess itself is an evidence of its value. There is no risk of intemperance in using a liquor which has neither spirit nor flavour. On the contrary, the richer the beverage is, the danger is the greater, and therefore it ought to be used with the greater caution. Quintilian hath remarked concerning the writings of Seneca, which are stuffed with antithesis, that "they abound in pleasant faults *." The example had not been dangerous, if the faults had not been pleasant. But the danger here was the greater, as the sentiments conveyed under these figures were excellent. The thought recommended the expression. An admiration of the former insinuated a regard to the latter, with which it was so closely connected, and both very naturally engaged imitation. Hence Seneca is justly considered as one of the earliest corrupters of the Roman eloquence. And here we may remark by the way, that the language of any

* Instit. Lib. x. Cap. I. Abundant dulcibus vitiis.

country is in no hazard of being corrupted by bad writers. The hazard is only when a writer of considerable talents hath not a perfect chastity of taste in composition; but, as was the case of Seneca, affects to excess what in itself is agreeable. Such a style, compared with the more manly elocution of Cicero, we call effeminate, as betraying a sort of feminine fondness for glittter and ornament. There is some danger that both French and English will be corrupted in the same manner. There have been some writers of eminence in both, who might be charged, perhaps as justly as Seneca, with abounding in pleasant faults.

But enough of the antithesis; I return to the consideration of periods in general. And on this head I shall only further remark, that when they consist of complex members, we must follow the same rule in arranging the clauses of each member, in order to give all possible energy to the sentence, that we do in arranging the members of the period. By doing thus, we shall never be in danger of thinking that the member is complete till it actually be so, just as by the structure of the period we are prevented from thinking the sentence finished before the end. A disappointment in the former case is of less moment, but it is still of some. In each it occasions a degree of langour which weakens the expression.

I shall give an example of a period where, in one of the members, this rule is not observed. "Having already shown how the fancy is affected "by the works of Nature, and afterwards con- "sidered in general both the works of Nature "and of *Art*, ‖ how they mutually assist and com- "plete each *other*, ‖ in forming such scenes and "prospects ‖ as are most apt to delight the mind "of the beholder; I shall in this paper "throw together some reflections on that parti- "cular art, ‖ which has a more immediate tenden- "cy than any other, ‖ to produce those pleasures "of the imagination, ‖ which have hitherto been "the subject of this discourse*." This sentence is a period, agreeably to the definition formerly given. Wherever we stop, the sentence is imperfect till we reach the end. But the members are not all composed according to the rule laid down. It consisteth of three members. The first ends at *Nature*, is a single clause, and therefore not affected by the rule; the second is complex, consisting of several clauses, and ends at *beholder*; the third is also complex, and concludes the sentence. The last member cannot be faulty, else the sentence would be no period. The fault must then be in the structure of the second, which is evidently loose. That member, though not the sentence, might conclude, and a reader

* Spectator, No. 415. O.

naturally supposes that it doth conclude, first at the word *art*, afterwards at the word *other*, both which are before its real conclusion. Such a composition therefore, even in periods, occasions, though in a less degree, the same kind of disappointment to the reader, and consequently the same appearance of feebleness in the style, which result from long, loose and complex sentences. A very little alteration in the faulty member will unite the clauses more intimately, and entirely remove the exception; as thus,——"and afterwards considered in general, how in forming "such scenes and prospects, as are most apt to "delight the mind of the beholder, the works "both of Nature and of Art mutually assist and "complete each other."

It may be thought, and justly too, that this care will sometimes make the expression appear elaborate. I shall only recommend it as one of the surest means of preventing this effect, to render the members as simple as possible, and particularly to avoid synonymas and redundancies, of which there are a few in the member now criticised. Such are *scenes* and *prospects*, *assist* and *complete*, *mutually* and *each other*. With the aid of this reformation also, the whole period will appear much better compacted as follows: "Having already shown "how the fancy is affected by the works of Na"ture; and afterwards considered in general "how in forming such scenes as are most apt to

"delight the mind of the beholder, || the works
"both of Nature and Art assist each other;
"I shall in this paper throw together some re-
"flections on that particular art, || which has a
"more immediate tendency than any other, || to
"produce those primary pleasures of the imagi-
"nation, || which have hitherto been the subject
"of this discourse."

PART III.—*Observations on loose sentences.*

In complex sentences of looser composition, there is, as was observed, a much greater risk of falling into a languid manner. This may arise from different causes. First, even where the sentence is neither long nor complex, the members will sometimes appear disjointed. The consequence always is, that a hearer will at first be in doubt, whether it be one sentence or more. Take the following for an example: "However, many "who do not read themselves, || are seduced by "others that *do;* and thus become unbelievers "upon trust, and at second *hand;* and this is "too frequent a case*." The harmony of the members taken severally, contributes to the bad effect of the whole. The cadence is so perfect at the end both of the first member and of the second, that the reader is not only disappointed, but sur-

* Swift's Sermons on the Trinity.

prised, to find the sentence still unfinished. The additional clauses appear out of their proper place, like something that had been forgotten.

Another cause of langour here is the excessive length of a sentence, and too many members. Indeed, wherever the sentiments of an author are not expressed in periods, the end of a member or clause, or even an intermediate word, as hath been observed already, may be the end of the sentence. Yet the commonness of such sentences, when they do not exceed an ordinary length, prevents in a great measure a too early expectation of the end. On the contrary, when they transgress all customary limits, the reader begins to grow impatient, and to look for a full stop or breathing-place at the end of every clause and member. An instance of this excess you have in the succeeding quotation: "Though in yes-"terday's paper, we considered how every thing "that is great, new, or beautiful, is apt to "affect the imagination with pleasure, we must "own that it is impossible for us to assign the ne-"cessary cause of this *pleasure*, because we know "neither the nature of an idea, nor the substance "of a human *soul*, which might help us to disco-"ver the conformity or disagreeableness of the "one to the *other*; and therefore, for want of such "a light, all that we can do, in speculations of "this kind, is to reflect on those operations of the "soul that are most *agreeable*, and to range, un-

" der their proper heads, what is pleasing or *dis-*
" *pleasing* to the *mind*, without being able to trace
" out the several necessary and efficient *causes*
" from whence the pleasure or displeasure arises*."
The reader will observe, that in this passage I have distinguished by italics all those words in the body of the sentence, no fewer than seven, at any of which, if there were a full stop, the construction of the preceding part would be complete. The fault here is solely in the length of the whole, and in the number of the parts. The members themselves are well connected.

In the next example we have both the faults abovementioned in one sentence: " Last year a pa-
" per was brought here from *England*, called a
" Dialogue between the Archbishop of Canterbury
" and Mr *Higgins*, which we ordered to be *burnt*
" by the common *hangman*, as it well *deserved*,
" though we have no more to do with his Grace of
" Canterbury, than you have with the Archbishop
" of *Dublin*, whom you tamely suffer to be *abus-*
" *ed openly*, and by *name*, by that paltry rascal of
" an *observator*; and lately upon an affair where-
" in he had no *concern*; I mean the business of
" the missionary of *Drogheda*, wherein our excel-
" lent primate was *engaged*, and did nothing but
" according to *law* and discretion†." Hardly

* Spectator, No. 413. O.

† Swift's Letter concerning the Sacramental test.

will you find in any of the worst English writers a more exceptionable sentence in point of composition than the preceding, which is taken from one of the best. The stops which might be in it will be found, on an attentive perusal, to be no fewer than fourteen; the clauses are exceedingly unequal, abrupt, and ill-compacted. Intricacy in the structure of a complex sentence might also be here exemplified as a cause of languor. But as this error never fails to create obscurity, it hath been considered already under a former head.

PART IV.—*Review of what has been deduced above in regard to arrangement.*

I have now briefly examined how far arrangement may contribute to vivacity, both in simple sentences and in complex, and from what principles in our nature it is, that the effect ariseth.

In this discussion I have had occasion to consider, in regard to simple sentences, the difference between what may properly be called the rhetorical and natural order, and that which I have denominated the artificial and grammatical, or the customary way of combining the words in any particular language. I have observed, as to the former, and taken some pains to illustrate the observation, that it is universal, that it results from the frame of spirit in which the sentiment, whatever it be, is spoken or written, that it is by

by consequence a sort of natural expression of that frame, and tends to communicate it to the hearer or the reader. I have observed also, that this order, which alone deserves the name of Natural, is in every language more or less cramped by the artificial or conventional laws of arrangement in the language; that, in this respect, the present languages of Europe, as they allow less latitude, are considerably inferior to Greek and Latin, but that English is not a little superior in this particular to some of the most eminent of the modern tongues. I have shewn also that the artificial arrangement is different in different languages, and seems chiefly accommodated to such simple explanation, narration, and deduction, as scarcely admits the exertion either of fancy or of passion.

In regard to complex sentences, both compound and decompound, I have remarked the difference between the loose sentence and the period; I have observed the advantages and the disadvantages of each in point of vivacity, the occasions to which they are respectively suited, the rules to be observed in composing them, and the faults which, as tending to enervate the expression and tire the reader, ought carefully to be avoided. I have also made some remarks on the different kinds of antithesis, and the uses to which they may properly be applied.

Thus much shall suffice for the general illustra-

tion of this article, concerning the vivacity which results from arrangement.

CHAP. IV.

Of the connectives employed in combining the Parts of a Sentence.

I AM very sensible that the remarks contained in the preceding chapter, on the particular structure and the particular arrangement in sentences, whether simple or complex, which are most conducive to vivacity, however well these remarks are founded, and however much they may assist us in forming a judgment concerning any performance under our review, are very far from exhausting this copious subject; and still farther from being sufficient to regulate our practice in composing.

For this reason I judged that the observations on the nature and the management of connexive particles contained in this chapter and the succeeding might prove an useful supplement to the two preceding ones (for they are connected with both), and serve at once to enlarge our conceptions on this subject, and to assist our practice. At first indeed I had intended to comprehend both these chapters in the foregoing. But when I reflected, on the other hand, not only that they would swell the article far beyond the ordinary

bounds, but that, however much the topics are related, the nature of the investigation contained in them, is both different in itself, and must be differently conducted, I thought it would have less the appearance of digression, and conduce more to perspicuity, to consider them severally under their proper and discriminating titles.

I need scarcely observe, that by connectives I mean, all those terms and phrases, which are not themselves the signs of things, of operations, or of attributes, but by which, nevertheless, the words in the same clause, the clauses in the same member, the members in the same sentence, and even the sentences in the same discourse, are linked together, and the relations subsisting among them are suggested. The last of these connexions I reserve for the subject of the ensuing chapter; all the rest I comprehend in this. The proper subject of this is the connectives of the several parts in the sentence; the proper subject of the next is the connectives of the several sentences in the discourse.

Section I.

Of Conjunctions.

It was observed already concerning the connectives, that of all the parts of speech, they are the

most unfriendly to vivacity. In their nature they are the least considerable parts, as their value is merely secondary. Yet, in respect of the difficulty there is in culling and disposing them, they often prove to an author the most considerable. In themselves they are but the taches which serve to unite the constituent parts in a sentence or a paragraph. Consequently, the less conspicuous they are, the more perfect will the union of the parts be, and the more easily will the hearer glide, as it were, from one word, clause, or member of a period into another. The more observable they are, the less perfect will the union be, and the more difficultly will the hearer pass on from member to member, from clause to clause, and from word to word. The cohesion of the parts in a cabinet or other piece of furniture seems always the more complete, the less the pegs and tacks so necessary to effect it, are exposed to view.

It is a secret sense of the truth of this doctrine with regard to language, which imperceptibly, as taste improves in a nation, influences their writers to prefer short to long conjunctions. With us in particular, it is the more necessary to attend to this circumstance, as the nouns and the verbs, which are the most significant words, are mostly monosyllables. For as every thing is judged by comparison, polysyllabic conjunctions must appear the more cumbersome on that very account.

Happily enough at present our conjunctions and relatives in most frequent use (for the last also are merely a species of connectives) are monosyllables *. A few which do not occur so often are dissyllables †. Almost all the polysyllabic conjunctions are now either disused altogether, or occur but rarely ‡.

In the ancient style which obtained in this island, the conjunctions were sometimes lengthened and rendered remarkable by combining them together. Thus the particle *that*, which is both a conjunction and a relative, was annexed to most of them. Two centuries ago we should not have said, "*After* I have spoken," but, "*After that* "I have spoken." In like manner we should then have said, *because that, before that, although that, whilst that, until that, except that, unless that, since that,* and *seeing that.* Sometimes they even used *if that, for that,* and *when that.* This particle seems to have been added, in order to distinguish the conjunction from the preposition

* Such are the following, in several of which the constituent syllable is also short, *and, too, or, nor, nay, yea, but, yet, if, tho', lest, than, as, ere, till, since, so, for, that, whilst, when, who, whose, whom, which, what.*

† These are, *also, likewise, before, after, because, besides, further, again, unless, whereas, altho'.*

‡ These are, *however, moreover, nevertheless, notwithstanding that, insomuch that, albeit, furthermore, forasmuch as.* The three last may be counted obsolete, except with scriveners. The rest cannot entirely be dispensed with.

or the adverb, as the word to which it was annexed, was often susceptible of both uses, and sometimes of all the three *. But the event hath shown that this expedient is quite superfluous. The situation marks sufficiently the character of the particle, so that you will rarely find an ambiguity arising from this variety in the application. The disuse therefore of such an unnecessary appendage is a real improvement.

The relatives, as was hinted before, partake of the nature of conjunction, both as they are the instruments of linking the members of sentences together, and as they have no independent signification of their own. These, when in coupling the clauses of a paragraph they are joined with a preposition, form what may properly be termed a sort of complex conjunctions. Such are, according to the original form of the words, *upon*

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* The same manner of forming the conjunctions is retained to this day, both in French and in Italian. They are in French, *apres que, parce que, avant que, bien que, de peur que, tandis que, jusqu'a ce que, a moins que, depuis que, lors que*; in Italian, *subito che, perciò che, prima che, anchora che, per tema che, mentre che, sin tanto che, altro che, da che, già sia che.* An effect of the improvement of taste, though not in the same degree, may be observed in both these languages, similar to that which hath been remarked in English. Some drawling conjunctions formerly used, are now become obsolete, as in French, *encore bien que, bien entendu que, comme ainsi soit que*; in Italian, *concio fosse cosa che, per laqual cosa che, già sia cosa che.* The necessary aid of the particle *que* in French for expressing the most different and even contrary relations, hath induced their celebrated critic and grammarian Abbé Girard to style it *the conductive conjunction.* The same appellation may be assigned with equal propriety to the *che* in Italian.

which, unto which, with that, by which, or, according to a method of combining entirely analogical in our language, *whereupon, whereunto, therewith, whereby.* In the use of such drawling conjunctions, whether in the loose or in the compound form, there is considerable risk, as is evident from the principles above explained, of rendering the sentence tiresome, and the expression languid.

Some writers, sensible of the effect, seem totally to have mistaken the cause. They have imputed the flatness to the combination, imagining that the uncompounded form of the preposition and the pronoun would nowise affect the vivacity of the style. Lord Shaftesbury was of this opinion, and his authority hath misled other writers. His words are: "They have of late, "it's true, reformed in some measure the gouty "joints and darning work of *whereunto's, where-* "*by's, thereof's, therewith's,* and the rest of this "kind; by which complicated periods are so "curiously strung, or hooked on, one to another, "after the long-spun manner of the bar or pul- "pit*." Accordingly several authors have been so far swayed by this judgment, as to condemn,

* Misc. v. chap. 1. For the same reason we should condemn the *quapropter, quamobrem, quandoquidem, quemadmodum,* of the Latin, whose composition and use are pretty similar. To these a good writer will not frequently recur; but their best authors have not thought fit to reject them altogether.

in every instance, this kind of composition of the adverbs *where*, *here*, and *there*, with prepositions. But if he should be satisfied that the fault, where there is a fault, doth not lie in the composition, let us make the experiment on one of the long-spun complicated periods of which the author speaks, by resolving the *whereupon* into *upon which*, by saying *unto which*, for *whereunto*, and so of the rest, and I am greatly deceived, if we find the darning work less coarse, or the joints less gouty, than they were before this correction. And if in any case the combined shall displease more than the primitive form, I suspect that the disuse will be found the cause and not the consequence of its displeasing.

Compositions of this sort with dissyllabic prepositions are now mostly obsolete, and it would be silly to attempt to revive them. But with several of the monosyllabic prepositions they are still used. I shall therefore here offer a few arguments against dispossessing them of the ground which they still retain. First, they occasion a little variety. And even this, however inconsiderable, unless some inconvenience could be pleaded on the opposite side, ought, in conjunctions especially, for a reason to be given afterwards, to determine the matter. Secondly, they sometimes, without lengthening the sentence, interrupt a run of monosyllables (a thing extremely disagreeable to some critics), very oppor-

tunely substituting a dissyllable instead of two of the former. Thirdly, they in certain cases even prevent a little obscurity, or at least inelegance. It was observed on a former occasion, that when any relative occurs oftener than once in a sentence, it will seldom be compatible with the laws of perspicuity, that it should refer to different antecedents. And even if such change of the reference should not darken the sense, it rarely fails to injure the beauty of the expression. Yet this fault in long periods and other complex sentences is often scarcely avoidable. Sometimes the only way of avoiding it is by changing an *of which*, *in which*, or *by which*, into *whereof*, *wherein*, or *whereby*. This will both prevent the too frequent recurrence of the syllable *which*, none of the most grateful in the language; and elude the apparent inaccuracy of using the same sound in reference to different things. Fourthly, more is sometimes expressed by the compound than by the primitive form, and consequently there are occasions on which it ought to be preferred. The pronouns *this*, *that*, and *which*, do not so naturally refer to a clause or a sentence, as to a word; nor do the two first refer so naturally to a plural as to a singular; whereas the compounds of *here*, *there*, and *where*, do with equal propriety refer to all these. Few will pretend that the place of *therefore* would be properly supplied by *for that*, or that *with what* would be

in every case an equivalent for *wherewith*; or *after this*, for *hereafter*; but even in other instances not quite so clear, we shall on examination find a difference. In such a sentence as this, for example, "I flattered her vanity, lied to "her, and abused her companions, and *thereby* "wrought myself gradually into her favour;" it is evident that the words *by that* would here be intolerable; and if you should say *by these actions*, or *by so doing*, the expression would be remarkably heavier and more awkward.

The genuine source of most of these modern refinements is, in my opinion, an excessive bias to every thing that bears a resemblance to what is found in France, and even a prejudice against every thing to which there is nothing in France corresponding;

> Whose manners still our tardy apish nation
> Limps after, in base awkward imitation *.

Hence it proceeds, that we not only adopt their words and idioms, but even imitate their defects, and act as if we thought it presumption to have any words or phrases of our own, to which they have nothing correspondent. I own that this may happen insensibly, without design or affectation on the part of our writers; and that either from the close intercourse which we have with that nation, or from the great use that we make

* Shakespeare, Richard II.

of their writings, and the practice now so frequent of translating them. But that I may not be thought unreasonable in imputing to this cause, what is not justly chargeable on it, I shall specify in the margin a few instances, wherein the penury of the French language hath, in the way of which I am speaking, been hurtful to the English *.

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* The local adverbs are very properly classed with us, as in Latin, into three orders, for denoting rest or motion *in* a place, motion *to* it, and motion *from* it. In every one of these orders, there are three adverbs to denote *this* place, *that* place, and *what*, or *which* place, interrogatively or relatively. In French there are only two orders, the first and second being confounded. See the scheme subjoined.

	1	2	3
English.	Here	Hither	Hence.
	There	Thither	Thence.
	Where	Whither	Whence.

	1 & 2	3
French.	Ici	D'ici.
	Là	De là.
	Ou	D'ou.

Since the Restoration, which I take to be neither the only nor the earliest, but the most successful era, in regard to the introduction of French books, French sentiments, and French modes, into this island, the adverbs of the first order have almost always been employed in conversation, and frequently in print, for those of the second. Thus we say, "*Where* are you going?" and sometimes, "Come *here*," though the only proper adverbs, in such cases, be *whither* and *hither*. Another instance the above scheme furnishes of the absurd tendency we have to imitate the French, even in their imperfections. The local adverbs of the third order are with them distinguished from those of the first and second only by prefixing the preposition *de*, which signifies *from*. This is manifestly the origin of those pleonastic phrases in English, *from hence*, *from thence*, and *from whence*. I shall produce another evidence of the bad effect of this propensity. So many of Nature's works are known to us by pairs, the sexes for example, and the most of the organs and the members of the human body, and, indeed, of every animal body,

I shall only here subjoin to these observations, that if the *whereunto's*, and the *therewithal's*, may

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that it is natural, even in the simplest state of society, and in the rise of language, to distinguish the dual number from the plural. And though few languages have made, or, at least, retained this distinction in the declension of nouns, yet most have observed it in the numeral adjectives. The English, in particular, have observed it with great accuracy, as appears from the annexed scheme.

When the discourse is of —	two;	when it is of — several.
Collectively — — —	Both.	— — All.
Distributively — —	Each.	— — Every.
Indiscriminately — —	Either.	— — Any.
Exclusively — —	Neither.	— — None.
Relatively and Interrogatively	Whether.	— — Which.

This distinction in French hath been overlooked altogether, and in English is beginning, at least in some instances, to be confounded. Perhaps the word *every* will not be found in any good writer applied to two; but it is certain, that the word *each* hath usurped the place of *every*, and is now used promiscuously by writers of all denominations, whether it be *two* or *more* that are spoken of. The pronominal adjective *whether* is now quite obsolete, its place being supplied by *which*. About a century and a half ago, *whether* was invariably used of *two*, as appears from all the writings of that period, and particularly from the translation of the Bible; thus Matt. xxi. 31. "*Whether* of them twain did the will of his father?" and xxiii. 17. "*Whether* is greater, the gold, or the temple?" The rest of this class have hitherto retained their places amongst us. How long they may continue to do so, it will be impossible to say. Indeed, the clumsy manner in which these places are supplied in French, doth perhaps account for our constancy, as it will prove, I hope, our security against a sudden change in this particular. It would sound extremely awkward in our ears *all the two*, *or the one or the other*, and, *nor the one nor the other*, which is a literal version of *tous les deux*, *ou l'un ou l'autre*, and *ni l'un ni l'autre*, the phrases whereby *both*, *either*, and *neither*, are expressed in French. It may be said, custom softens

be denominated the gouty joints of style, the *viz's*, and the *i. e.'s*, and the *e. g.'s*, for *videlicet*, *id est*, and *exempli gratia*, may not unfitly be termed its crutches. Like these wretched props, they are not only of foreign materials, but have a foreign aspect. For as a stick can never be mistaken for a limb, though it may, in a clumsy manner, do the office of one, so these pitiful supplements can never be made to incorporate with the sentence, which they help in a bungling manner to hobble forwards.

I proceed to exemplify further in our own language, the general observation made above, that an improvement of taste leads men insensibly to abbreviate those weaker parts of speech, the connexive particles. I have remarked already the total suppression of the conjunction *that* after *because*, *before*, *although*, and many others of the same stamp, with which it was wont to be inse-

every thing, and what though several words thus fall into disuse, since experience shows us that we can do without them? I answer, first, change itself is bad, unless evidently for the better; secondly, perspicuity is more effectually secured by a greater choice of words, when the meanings are distinct; thirdly, vivacity is promoted both by avoiding periphrasis, and by using words as much as possible limited in signification to the things meant by the speaker; fourthly, in an abundance without confusion, there is always greater scope for variety. And to come to the particular defect which gave rise to these observations, every body must be sensible, that the frequent recurrence in French to these uncouth sounds, *quoi*, *que*, *qui*, *quelque*, and the like, doth not serve to recommend the language to the ear of a stranger.

parably combined. But we have not stopt here. This particle is frequently omitted, when there is no other conjunction to connect the clauses, as in this example, "Did I not tell you positively, "I would go myself?" In order to construe the sentence, we must supply the word *that* after *positively*. Concerning this omission I shall just observe, what I would be understood, in like manner, to observe concerning the omission of the relatives, to be mentioned afterwards, that though in conversation, comedy, and dialogue, such an ellipsis is graceful, when, without hurting perspicuity, it contributes to vivacity; yet, wherever the nature of the composition requires dignity and precision in the style, this freedom is hardly to be risked.

Another remarkable instance of our dislike to conjunctions is a method, for aught I know, peculiar to us; by which the particles *tho'* and *if*, when in construction with any of the tenses, compounded with *had*, *could*, *would*, or *should*, are happily enough set aside as unnecessary. This is effected by a small alteration in the arrangement. The nominative is shifted from its ordinary station before the auxiliary, and is placed immediately after it, as in these words, "Had I "known the danger, I would not have engaged "in the business;" that is, "*If* I had known the "danger."—"Should you remonstrate ever so "loudly, I would not alter my resolution," that

is, "*Tho'* you should remonstrate."——The reason that this transposition cannot be admitted in the other tenses is, that in them it would occasion an ambiguity, and give the sentence the appearance of an interrogation, which it scarcely ever hath in the tenses above mentioned. Sometimes, indeed, the preterimperfect admits this idiom, without rendering the expression ambiguous; as in these words, "Did I but know his intention," for "*If* I did but know his intention."—"Were "I present," for "*If* I were present." The tense, however, in such instances, may more properly be termed an aorist, than a preterite of any kind; and the mood is subjunctive.

Section II.

Of other Connectives.

Now that I am speaking of the auxiliaries, it may not be amiss to remark, that they too, like the conjunctions, the relatives, and the prepositions, are but words of a secondary order. The signification of the verb is ascertained by the infinitive or the participle which follows the auxiliar in the compound tenses of the active voice, and always by the participle in the passive. The auxiliaries themselves serve only to modify the verb, by adding the circumstances of time, affirmation, supposition, interrogation, and some

others. An abridgment in these, therefore, which are but weak, though not the weakest parts of discourse, conduceth to strengthen the expression. But there are not many cases wherein this is practicable. Sometimes *had* supplies emphatically the place of *would have*, and *were* of *would be*. An instance of the first we have in the words of Martha to our Saviour. "Lord, if thou "hadst been here, my brother *had* not died *." The last clause would have been feebler, had it been, "my brother *would* not *have* died." An example of the second is the words of the Israelites on hearing the report of the spies. "*Were* "it not better for us to return into Egypt †?" for "*Would* it not *be* better?"

But to come to the consideration of the relatives; the first real improvement which taste hath produced here, is the dismission of the article from its wonted attendance on the pronoun *which*. The definite article could nowhere be less necessary, as the antecedent always defines the meaning. Another effect of the same cause is the introduction of *what* instead of *that which*, as, "I remember *what* you told me;" otherwise, "*that which* you told me." Another is the extending of the use of the word *whose*, by making it serve as the possessive of the pronoun *which*.

* John xi. 21.

† Num. xiv. 3.

The distinction between *who* and *which* is now perfectly established in the language. The former relates only to persons, the latter to things. But this distinction, though a real advantage in point of perspicuity and precision, affects not much the vivacity of the style. The possessive of *who* is properly *whose*, the pronoun *which*, originally indeclinable, had no possessive. This want was supplied in the common periphrastic manner, by the help of the preposition and the article. But as this could not fail to enfeeble the expression, when so much time was given to mere conjunctives, all our best authors, both in prose and in verse, have come now regularly to adopt in such cases the possessive of *who;* and thus have substituted one syllable in the room of three, as in the example following: "Philosophy, *whose* "end is to instruct us in the knowledge of Na- "ture,"——for, "Philosophy, *the* end *of which* is "to instruct us."—Some grammarians remonstrate. But it ought to be remembered, that use well established must give law to grammar, and not grammar to use. Nor is this acceptation of the word *whose* of recent introduction into the language. It occurs even in Shakespeare, and almost uniformly in authors of any character since his time. Neither does there appear to be any inconvenience arising from this usage. The connection with the antecedent is commonly so close as to remove all possible ambiguity. If,

however, in any instance, the application should appear ambiguous, in that instance, without question, the periphrasis ought to be preferred. But the term thus applied to things could not be considered as improper, any longer than it was by general use peculiarly appropriated to persons, and, therefore, considered merely as an inflection of the pronoun *who*. Now, that cannot be affirmed to be the case at present.

Though to limit the signification of the pronouns would at first seem conducive to precision, it may sometimes be followed with inconveniencies which would more than counterbalance the advantage. "*That*," says Dr Lowth, "is used "indifferently both of persons and things, but "perhaps would be more properly confined to the "latter *." Yet there are cases wherein we cannot conveniently dispense with this relative as applied to persons; as first, after *who* the interrogative, "Who *that* has any sense of religion would "have argued thus?" Secondly, when persons make but a part of the antecedent: "The men "and things that he hath studied, have not con-"tributed to the improvement of his morals." In neither of these examples could any other relative be used. In the instances specified by Dr Priestley †, the *that* if not necessary, is at least more elegant than the *who*. The first is after a

* Introduction, Sentences. † Grammar, Pronouns.

superlative, as "He was the fittest person that "could then be found;" the second is after the pronominal adjective *the same;* as, "He is the "same man that you saw before." And it is even probable that these are not the only cases.

The possessive *its* of the neuter personal pronoun *it*, hath contributed in the same way, though not a relative, both to abbreviate and to invigorate the idiom of the present age. It is not above a century and a half since this possessive was first brought into use. Accordingly, you will not find it in all the vulgar translation of the Bible. Its place there is always supplied either by the article and the preposition, as in these words, "They are "of those that rebel against the light; they know "not *the* ways *thereof*, nor abide in *the* paths "*thereof**," for "they know not *its* ways, nor "abide in *its* paths;" or by the possessive of the masculine, as in this verse, "The altar of burnt-"offerings with all *his* furniture, and the laver "and *his* foot †." The first method is formal and languid; the second must appear awkward to English ears, because very unsuitable to the genius of the language, which never, unless in the figurative style, as is well observed by Mr Harris ‡, ascribes gender to such things as are neither reasonable beings, nor susceptible of sex.

* Job xxiv. 13. † Exod. xxxi. 9. ‡ Hermes

The only other instance of abbreviation which I recollect in the pronouns, is the frequent suppression of the relatives *who*, *whom*, and *which*. This, I imagine, is an ellipsis peculiar to the English, though it may be exemplified from authors of the first note; and that too in all the cases following; first, when the pronoun is the nominative to the verb; secondly, when it is the accusative of an active verb; and thirdly, when it is governed by a preposition. Of the first case, which is rather the most unfavourable of the three, you have an example in these words, "I "had several men died in my ship of calentures *," for "*who* died." Of the second, which is the most tolerable, in these, "They who affect to "guess at the objects they cannot see †," for "*which* they cannot see." Of the third, in these, "To contain the spirit of anger, is the worthiest "discipline we can put ourselves to ‡," for "to "*which* we can put ourselves." Sometimes, especially in verse, both the preposition and the pronoun are omitted, as in the speech of Cardinal Wolsey, after his disgrace,

> Had I but serv'd my God with half the zeal
> I serv'd my king §,———

To complete the construction of this member of the

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* Gull. Trav. Honyhnhmns.

† Bol. Phil. Es. II. Sect. i.

‡ Spectator, No. 438. T.

§ Shakespeare's Henry VIII.

sentence, the words *with which* must be supplied immediately after "zeal." Concerning this idiom I shall only observe in general, that as it is the most licentious, and therefore the most exceptionable in the language, it ought to be used very cautiously. In some cases it may occasion obscurity; in others, by giving a maimed appearance to the sentence, it may occasion inelegance. In both these it ought carefully to be avoided *.

The only other part of speech which partakes of the weakness remarked in conjunctions, relatives, and auxiliary verbs, is prepositions. These are expressive of the relations which substantives, as the signs of things, bear to one another, or to the verbs, the symbols of agency with which they are construed. They answer the same purpose in connecting words, which the conjunctions

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* In French, by an idiom not unlike, the antecedent is often dropt, and the relative retained, as in this example, "Il ne faut pas se fier "*à qui* a beaucoup d'ambition." "A qui," for "à *celui* qui." The idiom is not the same in Italian, for though the antecedent is sometimes dropt, there is properly no ellipsis, as the relative is changed; as thus, "Lo stampatore *a chi* leggie," for *a quel che*. This is exactly similar to the English *what* for *that which*. By poetic licence there is sometimes an ellipsis of the antecedent in English verse, as in this line of Dryden, Georg. 2.

Which *who* would learn as soon may tell the sands.

Who for *he who*. More rarely when the antecedent is the regimen of a verb, as

I gladly shun'd *who* gladly fled from me. Rom. & Juliet.

Who for *him who*; but never when it is the regimen of a preposition.

answer in connecting clauses. For the same reason the shorter these particles are, they are the better. The less time you bestow on the insignificant parts of a sentence, the more significant will the whole appear. Accordingly in all languages the prepositions are commonly among their shortest words. With us such of them as are in most frequent use, consist of one short syllable only*. And even those which occur seldomer, rarely exceed two syllables†.

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* Such are, *at, in, of, from, till, to, for, by, through, near, with, on, off.*

† Such are, *above, below, along, across, amid, around, beyond, within, without, beside, among, between, except.* It may not be amiss to observe, that though the French in the commonest prepositions have the advantage of us, by reason of their frequent elisions, the coalition of some of them with the article, and their pronominal particles *y* and *en*, they have nevertheless greatly the disadvantage in the less common, which with them are not so properly denominated prepositions as prepositive phrases that supply the place of prepositions. In evidence of this take the French translation of all the dissyllabic prepositions above mentioned, except the four last. These are, *au dessus de, au dessous de, le long de, au travers de, au milieu de, autour de, au dela de, au dedans de, au dehors de.* On comparing the two languages merely in point of vivacity, the French, I think, excels in the colloquial and epistolary style, where the recurrence must be frequent to those petty aids of discourse, the prepositions first mentioned, and where there is little scope for composition, as there are almost no complex sentences. The English, on the contrary, excels in the more elaborate style of history, philosophy, and oratory, where a greater variety of prepositions is needed, and where there is more frequent occasion of recurring to the conjunctions. These indeed are rather unwieldy in French; and I am not sure but a tacit conviction of this is the cause that a sort of detached aphoristic style is getting much into vogue with their authors. I shall remark here

On this part of speech the improvements have not been so considerable (nor was there equal need), as on the conjunctions and the relatives. Yet even here the progress of taste hath not been entirely without effect. The *until* and *unto*, are now almost always, and the *upon*, very often, contracted into *till* and *to* and *on*. The *to* and the *for* are in some cases, without occasioning any inconvenience, and with a sensible advantage in point of energy, discarded altogether. Thus we say, "Forgive *us* our debts," and not, "forgive *to us* our debts." "I have gotten *you* a "licence," and not "I have gotten a licence *for* "*you*." The same manner hath also obtained in some other modern tongues. What I am next to mention is peculiar to us, the preposition *of* is frequently supplied by the possessive case of the noun. Lastly, which is a real acquisition in respect of vivacity, when two or more nouns are conjoined in the same construction, it is not

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also, that their vivacity of expression is often attained at the expence of perspicuity. "La personne qui l'aime," may mean either, "The person "who loves him," "The person who loves her," or, "The person who "loves it." Nay more, though there is a difference in writing between *qui l'aime* and *qu'il aime*, there is no difference in sound, and therefore the same phrase spoken may also mean, "The person whom he loves." In Italian there are several periphrastic prepositions in the same taste with the French, as "*a l'intorno di, di la di, in mezzo di, dentro di, fuori di, di sopra di, di sotto di.* There are only two prepositions in French which we are obliged to express by circumlocution. These are, *chez*, at the house of, and *selon*, according to.

necessary in English as in French, that the preposition of the first be repeated before each of the subsequent nouns. This ought to be done only in those cases wherein either perspicuity or harmony requires it.

Now that I am on the subject of the prepositions, it will not be improper to consider a peculiarity which is often to be found with us in their arrangement. In every other language the preposition is almost constantly prefixed to the noun which it governs; in English it is sometimes placed not only after the noun, but at a considerable distance from it, as in the following example, "The infirmary was indeed never so full as "on this day, *which* I was at some loss to account "*for*, till, upon my going abroad, I observed, that "it was an easterly wind*." Here no fewer than seven words intervene between the relative *which*, and the preposition *for* belonging to it. Besides, the preposition doth not here precede its regimen, but follow it. One would imagine, to consider the matter abstractly, that this could not fail in a language like ours, which admits so few inflections, to create obscurity. Yet this in fact is seldom or never the consequence. Indeed the singularity of the idiom hath made some critics condemn it absolutely. That there is nothing analagous in any known tongue, ancient or

* Spectator, No. 440. C.

modern, hath appeared to them a sufficient reason. I own it never appeared so to me.

If we examine the matter independently of custom, we shall find that the preposition is just as closely connected with the word, whether verb or noun, governing, as with the word, whether noun or pronoun, governed. It is always expressive of the relation which the one bears to the other, or of the action of the one upon the other. And as the cause in the order of Nature precedes the effect, the most proper situation for the preposition is immediately after the word governing, and before the word governed. This will accordingly in all languages be found the most common situation. But there are cases in all languages, wherein it is even necessary, that the word governing should come after the word governed. In such cases it is impossible that the preposition should be situated as above described. Only half of the description is then attainable; and the speaker is reduced to this alternative; either to make the preposition follow the word governing, in which case it must be detached from the word governed; or to make it precede the word governed, in which case it must be detached from the word governing. The choice in itself arbitrary custom hath determined in every tongue.

But will it be admitted as a maxim, that the custom of one language, or even of ever so many,

may be urged as a rule in another language, wherein no such custom hath ever obtained? An argument founded on so false a principle, must certainly be inconclusive. With us indeed either arrangement is good; but I suspect that to make the preposition follow the word governing, is more suitable than the other to the original idiom of the tongue, as in fact it prevails more in conversation. The most common case wherein there is scope for election, is with the relatives *whom* and *which;* since these, as in the example quoted, must necessarily precede the governing verb or noun. But this is not the only case. Vivacity requires sometimes, as hath been shown above, that even the governed part, if it be that which chiefly fixes the attention of the speaker, should stand foremost in the sentence. Let the following serve as an example: "*The man* whom you were so "anxious to discover, I have at length got infor-"mation *of*." We have here indeed a considerable hyperbaton, as grammarians term it; there being no less than thirteen words interposed between the noun and the preposition. Yet whether the expression can be altered for the better, will perhaps be questioned. Shall we say, "*Of* "*the man* whom you were so anxious to discover, "I have at length got information?—" Who sees not that by this small alteration, not only is the vivacity destroyed, but the expression is rendered stiff and formal, and therefore ill adapted to

the style of conversation? Shall we then restore what is called the grammatical, because the most common order, and say, "I have at length "gotten information of the man whom you "were so anxious to discover?" The arrangement here is unexceptionable, but the expression is unanimated. There is in the first manner something that displays an ardour in the speaker to be the messenger of good news. Of this character there are no traces in the last; and in the second there is a cold and studied formality which would make it appear intolerable. So much is in the power merely of arrangement. Ought we then always to prefer this way of placing the preposition after the governing word? By no means. There are cases wherein this is preferable. There are cases wherein the other way is preferable. In general, the former suits better the familiar and easy style, which copies the dialect of conversation, the latter more befits the elaborate and solemn diction, which requires somewhat of dignity and pomp.

But to what purpose, I pray, those criticisms which serve only to narrow our range, where there would be no danger of a trespass, though we were indulged with more liberty? Is it that the genius of our language doth not sufficiently cramp us without these additional restraints? But it is the unhappiness of the generality of critics, that when two modes of expressing

the same thing come under their consideration, of which one appears to them preferable, the other is condemned in gross, as what ought to be reprobated in every instance. A few contractions have been adopted by some writers which appear harsh and affected; and all contractions without exception must be rejected, though ever so easy and natural, and though evidently conducing to enliven the expression *. One order of

* About the beginning of the present century, the tendency to contract our words, especially in the compound tenses of the verbs, was undoubtedly excessive. The worst of it was, that most of the contractions were effected by expunging the vowels, even where there was no hiatus, and by clashing together consonants of most obdurate sound, as Swift calls them. This produced the animadversion of some of our ablest pens, Addison, Swift, Pope, and others, whose concurring sentiments have operated so strongly on the Public that contractions of every kind have ever since been in disgrace, even those of easy pronunciation, and which had been in use long before. Yet our accumulated auxiliaries seemed to require something of this kind. And though I am sensible that *wasn't*, *didn't*, *shouldn't*, and *couldn't*, are intolerably bad, there are others of more pleasant sound, to which our critics, without any injury to the language, might have given a pass. On the contrary, even those elisions whereby the sound is improved, as when the succession of an initial to a final vowel is prevented (which in all languages men have a natural propensity to avoid by contracting,) as *I'm* for *I am*; or when a feeble vowel is suppressed without harshness, as in the last syllable of the preterites of our regular verbs (which without a contraction we can never bear in verse); or when some of our rougher consonants are cut off after other consonants, as *'em* for *them*; (these I say) have all shared the same fate. Some indulgence, I think, may still be given to the more familiar style of dialogues, letters, essays, and even of popular addresses, which like comedy are formed on the dialect of conversation. In this dialect, wherein all language originates, the eagerness of conveying one's sentiments, the rapidity and ease of utterance, necessarily produce such

the words in a particular example seems worthy of the preference; and it must be established as a rule, that no other order in any case is to be admitted.

But we are not peculiar in this disposition, though we may be peculiar in some of our ways

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abbreviations. It appears indeed so natural, that I think it requires, that people be more than commonly phlegmatic, not to say stupid, to be able to avoid them. Upon the whole, therefore, this tendency, in my opinion, ought to have been checked and regulated, but not entirely crushed. That contracting serves to improve the expression in vivacity is manifest; it was necessary only to take care, that it might not hurt it in harmony or in perspicuity. It is certainly this which constitutes one of the greatest beauties in French dialogue; as by means of it, what in other languages is expressed by a pronoun and a preposition, they sometimes convey not by a single syllable, but by a single letter. At the same time, it must be owned, they have never admitted contractions, that could justly be denominated harsh; that they have not, on the other hand, been equally careful to avoid such as are equivocal, hath been observed already. We are apt to imagine, that there is something in the elision of letters and contraction of syllables, that is particularly unsuitable to the grave and solemn style. This notion of ours is, I suspect, more the consequence of the disuse than the cause; since such abbreviations do not offend the severest critic, when they occur in books written in an ancient or a foreign language. Even the sacred penmen have not disdained to adopt them into the simple, but very serious style of holy writ. Witness the κάλω for και ελω, απ' εμου for απο εμου, κάκεινος for και εκεινος, and many others. No doubt desuetude alone is sufficient to create an unsuitableness in any language. I will admit further, that there is some convenience in discriminating the different characters of writing by some such differences in the style. For both these reasons, I should not now wish to see them revived in performances of a serious or solemn nature.

of exerting it. The French critics, and even the academy, have proceeded, if not always in the same manner, on much the same principle, in the improvements they have made on their language. They have indeed cleared it of many, not of all their low idioms, cant phrases, and useless anomalies; they have rendered the style in the main more perspicuous, more grammatical, and more precise than it was before. But they have not known where to stop. Their criticisms often degenerate into refinements, and every thing is carried to excess. If one mode of construction, or form of expression, hath been lucky enough to please these arbitrators of the public taste, and to obtain their sanction, no different mode or form must expect so much as a toleration. What is the consequence? They have purified their language; at the same time they have impoverished it, and have, in a considerable measure, reduced all kinds of composition to a tasteless uniformity. Accordingly, in perhaps no language, ancient or modern, will you find so little variety of expression in the various kinds of writing, as in French. In prose and verse, in philosophy and romance, in tragedy and comedy, in epic and pastoral, the difference may be very great in the sentiments, but it is nothing, or next to nothing, in the style.

Is this insipid sameness to be envied them as an excellence? Or shall we Britons, who are lovers of freedom almost to idolatry, voluntarily hamper ourselves in the trammels of the French academy? Not that I think we should disdain to receive instruction from any quarter, from neighbours, or even from enemies. But as we renounce implicit faith in more important matters, let us renounce it here too. Before we adopt any new measure or limitation, by the practice of whatever nation it comes recommended to us, let us give it an impartial examination, that we may not, like servile imitators, copy the bad with the good. The rules of our language should breathe the same spirit with the laws of our country. They ought to prove bars against licentiousness, without being checks to liberty.

Section III.

Modern languages compared with Greek and Latin, particularly in regard to the composition of sentences.

Before I conclude this chapter, I must beg leave to offer a few general remarks on the comparison of modern languages with Greek and Latin. This I am the rather disposed to do, that it will serve further to illustrate the princi-

ples above laid down. I make no doubt but the former have some advantages in respect of perspicuity. I think not only that the disposition of the words according to certain stated rules may be made more effectually to secure the sentence against ambiguous construction, than can be done merely by inflection, but that an habitual method of arranging words which are in a certain way related to one another, must, from the natural influence of habit, on the principle of association, even where there is no risk of misconstruction, more quickly suggest the meaning, than can be done in the freer and more varied methods made use of in those ancient languages. This holds especially with regard to Latin, wherein the number of equivocal inflections is considerably greater than in Greek; and wherein there are no articles, which are of unspeakable advantage, as for several other purposes, so in particular for ascertaining the construction. But whilst the latter, though in this respect inferior, are, when skilfully managed, by no means ill adapted for perspicuous expression, they are, in respect of vivacity, elegance, animation, and variety of harmony, incomparably superior. I shall at present consider their advantage principally in point of vivacity, which in a great measure, when the subject is of such a nature as to excite passion, secures animation also.

In the first place, the brevity that is attainable in

these languages gives them an immense superiority. Some testimonies in confirmation of this remark may be obtained by comparing the Latin examples of antithesis quoted in the notes of the third section of the preceding chapter, with any English translation that can be made of these passages. And I suspect, if a version were attempted into any other European tongue, the success would not be much better.* It is remarkable, that in any inscription in which it is intended to convey something striking or emphatical, we can scarcely endure a modern language. Latin is almost invariably employed for this purpose in all the nations of Europe. Nor is this the effect of caprice or pedantry, as some perhaps will be apt to imagine. Neither does it proceed merely, as others will suppose, from the opinion that that language is more universally understood; for I suspect that this is a prerogative which will be warmly contested by the French; but it proceeds from the general conviction there is, of its superiority in point of vivacity. That we may be satisfied of this, let us make the trial, by translating any of the best Latin inscriptions or mottos which we remember, and we shall quickly perceive, that what charms us expressed in their idiom, is scarcely supportable when rendered into our own *. The luggage

* Let us make the experiment on the inscriptions of some of the best devices or emblems that are extant. I shall give a few examples

of particles, such as pronouns, prepositions, and auxiliary verbs, from which it is impossible for us entirely to disencumber ourselves, clogs the expression, and enervates the sentiment.

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for illustration's sake, from the sixth of Bouhours' *Entretiens d'Ariste et d'Eugene*, called *Les devises*. The first shall be, that of a starry sky without the moon, as representing an assembly of the fair, in which the lover finds not the object of his passion. The motto is, "Non mille quod absens." In English we must say, "A thousand "cannot equal one that is absent." Another instance shall be that of a rock in the midst of a tempestuous sea, to denote a hero who with facility baffles all the assaults of his enemies. The motto, "Conantia "frangere frangit." In English, "I break the things which attempt "to break me." In this example we are obliged to change the person of the verb, that the words may be equally applicable, both in the literal sense, and in the figurative, an essential point in this exercise of ingenuity. The personal pronoun in our language must always be expressed before the verb. Now the neuter *it* will not apply to the hero, nor the masculine *he* to the rock; whereas the first person applies equally to both. The third instance shall be that of the ass eating thistles, as an emblem of a parasite who serves as a butt to the company that entertain him. The motto, "Pungant dum saturent." In English, "Let them sting me, provided they fill my belly." In all these, how nervous is the expression in the original; how spiritless in the translation! Nor is this recourse to a multitude of words peculiar to us. All European languages labour, though not equally, under the same inconvenience. For the French, take Bouhours' version of the preceding mottos. The first is, "Mille ne valent pas ce que vaut une absente." The second, "Il brise ce qui fait effort pour le briser." This version is not perfectly adequate. The Latin implies a number of enemies, which is not implied here. Better thus, "Il brise les choses qui font effort pour le "briser." The third is, "Qu'ils me piquent, pourveu qu'ils me saouïl-"lent." These are in no respect superior to the English. The Italian and the Spanish answer here a little better. Bouhours himself, who is extremely unwilling, even in the smallest matters, to acknowledge any thing like a defect or imperfection in the French tongue, is nevertheless constrained to admit, that it is not well adapted for furnishing such mottos and inscriptions.

But it is not in respect of brevity only that the ancient tongues above-mentioned are capable of a more vivid diction, than the modern. For when, in the declensions and conjugations, the inflection, as is frequently the case, is attended with an increase of the number of syllables, the expression on the whole cannot always be denominated briefer, even when it consists of fewer words. However, as was observed before, when the construction is chiefly determined by inflection, there is much ampler scope for choice in the arrangement, and consequently the speaker hath it much more in his power to give the sentence that turn which will serve most to enliven it.

But even this is not all the advantage they derive from this particularity in their structure. The various terminations of the same word, whether verb or noun, are always conceived to be more intimately united with the term which they serve to lengthen, than the additional, detached, and in themselves insignificant, syllables or particles, which we are obliged to employ as connectives to our significant words. Our method gives almost the same exposure to the one as to the other, making the insignificant parts and the significant equally conspicuous; theirs much oftener sinks, as it were, the former into the latter, at once preserving their use, and hiding their weakness. Our modern languages may in this respect be compared to the art of carpen-

try in its rudest state, when the union of the materials employed by the artisan, could be effected only by the help of those external and coarse implements, pins, nails, and cramps. The ancient languages resemble the same art in its most improved state, after the invention of dovetail joints, grooves and mortices, when thus all the principal junctions are effected by forming properly the extremities or terminations of the pieces to be joined. For by means of these the union of the parts is rendered closer, whilst that by which their union is produced is scarcely perceivable.

Addison, if I remember right, somewhere compares an epic poem, (and the same holds, though in a lower degree, of every other literary production) written in Greek or in Latin, to a magnificent edifice, built of marble, porphyry, or granite, and contrasts with it such a poem or performance in one of our modern languages, which he likens to such a building executed in freestone, or any of those coarser kinds of stone which abound in some northern climates. The latter may be made to answer all the essential purposes of accommodation as well as the former, but as the materials of which it is constructed, are not capable of receiving the same polish, and consequently cannot admit some of the finer decorations, it will not only be inferior in beauty, but its imitative ornaments will be much less lively and expressive. It may nevertheless be equal

to the other both in grandeur and in utility. If the representations that have been given of the Chinese language are genuine, if all their words are monosyllabic and indeclinable, if every relation and circumstance, even time and number, must be expressed by separate particles, I should think a performance in their tongue might be justly compared to a building in brick, which may be both neat and convenient, but which hardly admits the highly ornamented finishing of any order of architecture, or indeed any other species of beauty than that resulting from the perception of fitness. But this only by the way.

If I might be indulged one other similitude, I should remark, that the difference between the ancient Greek and Latin, and the modern European languages, is extremely analogous to the difference there is between their garb and ours. The latter will perhaps be admitted to be equally commodious, possibly for some purposes more so; but with its trumpery of buttons and button-holes, ligatures and plaits formally opposed to one another, it is stiff and unnatural in its appearance; whereas the easy flow and continually varied foldings of the former, are at once more graceful, and better adapted for exhibiting nature in shape, attitude and motion, to advantage. The human figure is, I may say, burlesqued in the one habit, and adorned by the other. Custom, which can conciliate us to any thing, prevents us

from seeing this in ourselves and in one another; but we quickly perceive the difference in pictures and statues. Nor is there a painter or a statuary of eminence who is not perfectly sensible of the odds, and who would not think his art degraded in being employed to exhibit the reigning mode. Nay, in regard to the trifling changes, for they are but trifling, which fashion is daily making on our garments, how soon are we ourselves brought to think ridiculous, what we accounted proper, not to say elegant, but two or three years ago; whereas no difference in the fashions of the times and of the country, can ever bring a man of taste to consider the drapery of the toga or of the pallium, as any way ludicrous or offensive.

Perhaps I have carried the comparison farther than was at first intended. What hath been said, however, more regards the form of structure, than the matter of the languages compared. Notwithstanding the preference given above in point of form to the ancient tongues, the modern may, in point of matter, (or the words of which the language is composed) be superior to them. I am inclined to think that this is actually the case of some of the present European tongues. The materials which constitute the riches of a language, will always bear a proportion to the acquisitions in knowledge made by the people. For this reason, I should not hesitate to pronounce that English is considerably richer than

Latin, and in the main fitter for all the subtile disquisitions both of philosophy and of criticism. If I am more doubtful in regard to the preference, when our tongue is compared with Greek, notwithstanding the superiority of our knowledge in arts and sciences, the reason of my doubt is, the amazing ductility of that language, by which it was adapted to express easily in derivations and compositions, new indeed but quite analogical, and therefore quite intelligible, any discoveries in the sciences, or invention in the arts, that might at any time be made in their own, or imported from foreign countries. Nay, it would seem to be a general conviction of this distinguishing excellence, that hath made Europeans almost universally recur to Greek for a supply of names to those things which are of modern invention, and with which the Grecians themselves never were acquainted; such as microscope, telescope, barometer, thermometer, and a thousand others.

CHAP. V.

Of the Connectives employed in combining the Sentences in a Discourse.

In the preceding chapter I have discussed what I had to offer on the manner of connecting the words, the clauses, and the members of a sentence.

I intend in the present chapter to consider the various manners of connecting the sentences in a discourse, and to make some remarks on this subject, for the assistance of the composer, which are humbly submitted to the judgment of the reader.

Section I.

The necessity of Connectives for this purpose.

It will scarcely be doubted by any person of discernment, that as there should always be a natural connexion in the sentiments of a discourse, there should generally be corresponding to this, an artificial connexion in the signs. Without such a connexion the whole will appear a sort of patchwork, and not a uniform piece. To such a style we might justly apply the censure which the emperor Caligula gave of Seneca's, that is "sand without lime*," the parts having no cohesion. As to the connection of periods and other sentences, it is formed, like that of words, clauses, and members, mostly by conjunctions, frequently by pronouns, the demonstrative especially †, and sometimes by other methods, of which I shall soon have occasion to take notice.

* Arena sine calce. † *This, that, such.*

When facts are related in continuation, or when one argument, remark, or illustration, is with the same view produced after another, the conjunction is a *copulative* *. If the sentiment in the second sentence is in any way opposed to that which immediately precedes, an *adversative* is employed to conjoin them †. If it is produced as an exception, there are also *exceptive* conjunctions for the purpose ‡. Both the last mentioned orders are comprehended under the general name *disjunctive*. If the latter sentence include the reason of what had been affirmed in the preceding, the *causal* is used ‖. If, on the contrary, it contain an inference, it must be introduced by an *illative* §. Beside these, there is in every tongue a number of phrases, which have the power of conjunctions in uniting sentences, and are of great utility in composition, both for enabling the orator to hit with greater exactness the relations almost infinitely diversified that may subsist between the thoughts, and for the variety they afford in that part of speech, wherein variety is more needed than in any other ¶. It likewise deserves our notice, that several of those words

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* *And, now, also, too, likewise, again, besides, further, moreover, yea, nay, nor.* † *But, or, however, whereas.*

‡ *Yet, nevertheless.* ‖ *For.* § *Then, therefore.*

¶ *Add to this, in like manner, on the contrary, in short, to proceed, to return, to conclude.* We might produce phrases, if necessary, corresponding to each of the above orders.

which are always classed by grammarians and lexicographers among the adverbs, have, in uniting the several parts of a discourse, all the effect of conjunctions *. The general name of *connective*, I shall therefore apply indiscriminately to them all.

Section II.

Observations on the manner of using the connectives in combining sentences.

It remains to make a few observations with regard to the right manner of using the materials above specified, for connecting sentences and paragraphs. It is not indeed by any use of them, that we can propose to add much energy to the style, for that is rarely the gift of these particles; but we may employ them so as to preclude the irksomeness and languor which invariably result from an improper use of them.

My first observation shall be, that as there are many conjunctions and connective phrases appropriated to the coupling of sentences, that are never employed in joining the members of a sentence, so there are several conjunctions appro-

* Such are some adverbs of time, as *then*, signifying at that time, *hitherto, formerly*; of place, as *here, thus far*; of order, as *first, secondly, finally*; of resemblance, as *thus, accordingly*; of contrariety, as *else, otherwise, contrariwise*.

priated to the latter use, which are never employed in the former; and some that are equally adapted to both these purposes. This distinction in connectives will be found in different instances to flow from different sources. In some it is a natural distinction arising from the very import of the words; in which case we shall always find, on inquiry, that it obtains alike in every tongue. In other instances, it is a distinction merely customary, founded on the usages which prevail in a particular language.

As to those particles which are naturally fitted for conjoining clauses and members, but not sentences, they are chiefly the comparative *, the hypothetical †, and the intentional ‡. Let it not be imagined, that because a conjunction which falls under one or other of these denominations, is often found in the beginning of a sentence, it serves to couple the sentence with that which went before. Such a connexive will always be discovered, on examination, to have no reference to any thing without the sentence. Consider the following examples. "If ye love me, ye "will keep my commandments." "Tho' I tell "you what I am, ye will not believe me." "That I might save sinners, I came into the "world." It is manifest that the conjunction

* *Than.* † *If, tho', altho', when, unless, except.*
‡ *That, so that, inasmuch that, lest.*

wherewith each of these sentences begins, marks singly the relation that subsists between the two following clauses, or the nature of the dependence which the one has on the other. It is not even implied in the expression, that any thing had been said before. Accordingly, the same sense, without any variation, is expressed when the clauses are transposed; though sometimes the one arrangement will exhibit it with greater energy than the other. Thus, "Ye will keep my "commandments, if ye love me;" "Ye will not "believe me, though I tell you what I am;" and "I came into the world, that I might save sin-"ners," are precisely the same sentiments with those contained in the examples produced.

But may not the subordinate part connected with the additional particle, properly constitute one sentence, and the declaration another? Impossible. Every sentence must contain the enunciation of some proposition distinctly intelligible by itself, and expressive of some judgment, desire, or purpose of the speaker. But what only points to the motive or condition of something yet untold, answers none of these ends. Thus the words "Unless ye repent," enunciate nothing, and therefore convey to the hearer no information of judgment, purpose or desire. They give indeed the expectation of such information, and thereby keep up the attention, till we hear what follows. No sooner are the

words "ye shall perish" added, than we have the explicit declaration of a certain judgment or sentiment of the speaker. For this reason grammarians have justly remarked, that in every sentence there must be a verb in the indicative mood either expressed or implied. In all the three examples above given, we have it expressed in the second clause of their original form; the verb in the hypothetical part, and in that which marks the intention, is properly in the subjunctive or potential. It matters not whether the mood be distinguished by inflection, arrangement, or particles. In commands, interrogations, and wishes, the indicative is not expressed but implied, and by the idiom of the tongue suggested to the understanding with sufficient clearness. The interrogative, and the optative, as well as the imperative, are, in respect of sense, totally distinct from the two moods above-mentioned; though in most languages distinguished only by particles or arrangement*. Thus, though in these three sentences, "Go away;" "Will ye go away?" and "O that ye would go away;" there is properly no indicative expressed, yet it is so manifestly implied, that none who understands the language can be at a loss to perceive, that each of them fully enunciates a certain affection of the

* See Hermes, B. I. chap. viii.

speaker, a command, request, or wish. They signify neither more nor less than "I command "you to go away;" "I desire to be informed "whether ye will go away;" and "I wish that "ye would go away."

What hath been said of the conditional and intentional particles, holds still more evidently of the comparative particle *than*, which as frequently it doth not even need to be followed by a verb in any mood, so it can never begin the sentence without a manifest hyperbaton. The particle *as* is sometimes strictly a comparative conjunction. Such it is in these words, "As your fathers did, "so do ye." In this case it falls under the same predicament with the conditional connectives. Sometimes it is equivalent to *thus*, and may be still called a comparative particle, as it intimates some resemblance in that which follows to that which preceded. But this is also effected by the copulatives *likewise*, and *in like manner*. Such it is in the beginning of this similitude,

As when an angel by divine command *.

In this case it evidently connects sentences. Again, the *illative* is perfectly adapted for connecting sentences. The inference itself may very properly be expressed in a proposition distinctly enunciated, and, therefore, independently intelligible.

* Addison's Campaign.

The conjunction serves only to intimate that the reason or evidence of this judgment, which may also be a distinct proposition, was assigned in the words immediately preceding. This reasoning holds, in like manner, with regard to the *causal* conjunction. The relation between the sentences is the same; the order only is inverted; as we have here the consequence before the cause. And I suppose it is too clear to need illustration, that there is nothing in the import of the words to hinder *copulatives* and *disjunctives* from connecting sentences as well as members, and members as well as sentences. Yet even among those that are alike fitted for both purposes, there is some difference in point of strength. From their very nature they do not all unite the parts with equal closeness. They are like cements which differ in their degrees of tenacity. Thus the illative conjunctions and the causal constitute a more intimate union, than the adversative and the copulative. Again, that formed by demonstrative pronouns seems weaker than that effected by conjunctions. So much for the natural difference in the connectives resulting from the different import of the words.

That there is also a great, though arbitrary difference, arising from idiom, is unquestionable. In the best authors of antiquity, we often meet with sentences that begin with a relative pronoun, answering to our *who*, *whom*, or *which*. By

all the most eminent writers among the moderns, not only in English, but in other European tongues, this practice is now, I think, carefully avoided. It is custom only that can make this difference. When the cause is purely natural, the effect will be found the same in all languages. Accordingly, what was observed above concerning the conditional, intentional, and comparative conjunctions, is equally applicable to every tongue. And if we consider abstractly the effect of the relatives, we shall find, that what follows the *who*, *whom*, or *which*, is often the enunciation of some judgment, purpose, or desire, which, as it may constitute a separate sentence, serves to vindicate from the charge of impropriety the usage of the ancients. Yet there is some reason also on the side of the moderns. The personal pronouns do but presuppose the subject, whether person or thing, to be known, and, consequently, do no more than supersede the repetition of the name. There can be, therefore, no doubt of the propriety of beginning sentences with these. Whereas the relatives not only refer to something immediately said, that we may know the subject of discourse, but seem so closely to connect the part which follows with that which precedes, that the one makes, as it were, the description of either the nominative, or the regimen of the verb, in the other. In this view, they may be said to create a union too close to subsist conveniently

between different sentences. There is at least a risk, that they will give such an ambiguous appearance to the second, as to render it doubtful, whether it be a separate sentence, or a member of the foregoing. For this reason, the illative *wherefore*, as it includes the power of the pronoun *which*, doth not seem to be so analogically used by our writers, in connecting sentences, as in connecting members.

Again, as an irrefragable evidence that there is a difference in connectives arising purely from idiom, let it be observed, that we find it sometimes taking place among conjunctions of the same order. The causal *because* forms too close a union to subsist between separate sentences. The case is different with the causal *for*, though in every other respect synonymous. This latter particle is not adapted for uniting clauses which must necessarily be included in the same sentence. As an evidence that this distinction can be attributed only to custom, we may remark, that it is variable, differing in different ages. For instance, in Shakespeare's time, the causal particles seem to have been used promiscuously. We have at least in his writings several examples, in which he uses the particle *for*, where every writer at present would say *because*, as in the following passage:

> Heaven defend your good souls, that ye think,
> I will your serious and great business scant,
> *For* she is with me *.

* Othello.

Nay, even among the copulatives, which, of all the conjunctions, are the most vague in their application, there are some that use seems to have appropriated to the coupling of sentences, not of members, such as *again*, *further*, *besides*; and some to the uniting not of sentences so properly as of paragraphs, or even of larger portions of writing, than commonly fall under that denomination, such as *moreover*, and *furthermore*.

The copulative *and*, on the contrary, some critics are for confining to the single purpose of uniting the parts within the sentence, and seem to imagine, that there is some impropriety in using it for combining sentences. But as in this opinion, from what hath been evinced above, it is evident they are not supported by any argument from the import of the words, this conjunction being naturally on the same footing with the other copulatives; so neither have they any plea from usage in its favour. The examples for the contested use, which might be produced from all the best authorities in the language, are innumerable. But though use alone, in matters of language, is ever held a sufficient reason why things should continue in the state wherein we find them, when there is no positive ground for an alteration, I shall, in the present case, where, indeed, I could never discover the vestige of a reason for change, produce two arguments on the opposite side against excluding this particle from

a privilege it hath always heretofore possessed; arguments which, I hope, will appear satisfactory. First, being a monosyllable, it will, on a principle above explained, if not used too often, serve to smooth the current of the discourse; inasmuch as it will render the transition from sentence to sentence easier, than it is possible to render it when recourse is always had to connectives of greater length. Secondly, it adds one to the number of the copulatives, and, consequently, (where variety is of importance, as it certainly is here, on a principle presently to be explained,) this particle, i not absolutely necessary, is at least convenient.

My second observation is, that one of the best expedients for preventing the connexives from becoming too conspicuous, is to avoid the frequent recurrence to the same particles, especially if they consist of more than one syllable. And if so, with still greater reason must we avoid recurring often to the same conjunctive phrases.

I do not deny that there are cases wherein the repetition even of a conjunction, like other rhetorical repetitions, may add to the energy of the expression. Thus when several successive sentences bear the same relation to one that preceded, or to one that is to follow, this containing the common cause, consequence, motive, or concomitant of what is signified in those, they may be ushered more emphatically, by repeating the connexive than by varying it. The common re-

lation gives a propriety to the figure. But such cases are rare and easily distinguished. As to those which usually occur to the composer, it may be asserted to hold universally, that nothing will contribute more to enfeeble the style, than frequently to recur to the same heavy conjunctions, or long connectives, whatever they be. The *now*, *and*, *for*, *but*, *nay*, *nor*, have this advantage from their brevity, that though often repeated, they pass almost unnoticed. But who, that hath any taste, can endure the incessant quick returns of the *also*'s and the *likewise*'s, and the *moreover*'s, and the *however*'s, and the *notwithstanding*'s? An excess in these is insupportable. It is a maxim in elocution that will not often be found to fail, that in the use of the more ignoble parts of speech, there is greater need of variety than in the use of such as are of higher quality. The very significance of the nobler parts doth, as it were, support their dignity; but since the attendance of the less noble is necessary, shift them oftener, obtrude not on us always the same individuals, and we shall have less leisure to criticise them, or to advert to their insignificance.

The third remark I shall make on this subject is, that another useful expedient for answering the same end, is to vary the situation of the conjunction, wherever the idiom of the tongue and the harmony of the sentence will permit the variation. The place where we should naturally expect to find it, when

it connects two sentences, is doubtless the beginning of the second. But in most languages a little latitude is indulged on this article. In those cases, therefore, which admit this freedom, one, two, or more words may precede the conjunction, and serve as a cover to render it less observable. In the beginning it stands by itself; whereas, placed in the manner now mentioned, it may be said to stand in a crowd. But no tongue whatever gives this indulgence in assigning a place to every connexive.

With us in particular, no monosyllabic conjunction, except the illative *then*, can be thus transposed*. Our language, however, hath been abundantly indulgent (where indulgence is of greater consequence) in the power it gives us in the disposal of those which consist of more than one syllable. Thus almost all the copulatives which come under this denomination †, the disjunctives, *however*, and *nevertheless* ‡, and the illative *there-*

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* There is another monysyllabic conjunction, which, even when it connects sentences, is not placed in the beginning of the second. But this implies no transposition, as the first place could not be assigned to it without the violation of universal practice. The particle I mean is the conjunction *too*, when it signifies *also*. Thus we say, "He *too* was included "in the act of indemnity." To say, "*Too* he," would not be English.

† The copulative *again* cannot conveniently be transposed, as it would scarcely fail to occasion an ambiguity, and be mistaken for the adverb signifying *a second time*.

‡ The disjunctive *whereas* is never transposed.

fore, may be shifted to the second, the third, the fourth place, or even further.

It would be difficult to assign a satisfactory reason for the difference that hath been made in this respect, between conjunctions of one syllable, and those of more. Yet we have ground to believe, that it is not merely accidental, as some traces of the same distinction are to be found in most languages*. It will indeed appear, from what hath been illustrated above, that the monosyllabic conjunctions need not be managed with the same address as the others, there not being the same hazard that they would soon become tiresome. On the contrary, it may be said, that being of themselves so inconsiderable, it is necessary that their situation be ascertained, in order to give them that degree of influence, without which they could not answer the purpose even of conjunctions.

But it may be argued against the solution now given, and, indeed, against the whole of the precedent reasoning on this article, "How few, if "any, have ever reflected on the different effects "of these different arrangements? Or how could a

* In Latin, for example, the monosyllabic conjunctions, *et*, *sed*, *nam*, when they connect two sentences, regularly maintain their place in the beginning of the second; whereas, to the dissyllables, *quoque*, *autem*, *enim*, more latitude is allowed. In French too, the monosyllables *et*, *mais*, *car*, have invariably the same situation. It is otherwise with *aussi*, *pourtant*, *pourquoi*; though there is not so great freedom allowed in arranging them, as in the English dissyllabic conjunctions.

" difference, not reflected on, give rise to a differ-
" ence in the laws by which their respective pla-
" ces are assigned them?" To this I answer, that taste alone, whose general principles are the same in every people, and which, like every appetite, seeks its own gratification, produceth insensibly, as it improves, and even where there is no direct intention, an improvement in the language as well as in the arts. It is by gradual, and what may be termed implicit compact, that the language, like the common law of every nation, hath obtained at first an establishment among them. It is to the same cause that the alterations to the better or to the worse, as knowledge and taste advance or decline among the people, are afterwards to be ascribed. That there should ever have been any formal or explicit convention or contrivance in this case, is an hypothesis in my opinion, not only unsupported by reason, but repugnant to it. It is the province of criticism and philosophy which appear much later than language, being of much slower growth, and to which close attention and reflection are not less requisite than taste, to investigate the latent causes in the principles of taste, by which the various changes have been actually, though in a manner imperceptibly, produced.

My fourth observation is, that though certain circumstances require, that one connexive be immediately followed by another, the accumulating

of these without necessity ought always to be avoided. There are some complex conjunctions, which appear to be two, because in writing custom hath not combined the parts into one word, but are properly one in import and effect. Such are, *as if*, *so that*, *insomuch that*, and a few others. Of these I am not now speaking.

As to those between which, though adjoined in situation, there is no coalition in sense, let it be observed, that—there are cases in which propriety requires the aid of more than one;—there are cases in which the idiom of the language permits the use of more; that, on the contrary,—there are cases in which propriety rejects the union altogether; and lastly,—there are cases in which idiom rejects it. Each of these four classes I shall consider severally.

First, as to the cases wherein propriety requires the aid of more than one connexive, it was remarked formerly, that some conjunctions are limited to the use of connecting words and members, whilst others are employed indiscriminately for the connection of words, members, or sentences. When one of each kind meets in the beginning of a sentence, the intention of the first is generally to express the relation which the sentence bears to that immediately preceding; and the intention of the second, to express the dependence of the one clause on the other, in the sentence so introduced. Take the following passage of scripture

for an example: "I go to prepare a place for you. "AND *if* I go to prepare a place for you; I will "come again, and receive you to myself*." The copulative AND connects the two sentences. The hypothetical conjunction *if* serves only to mark the first member of the last sentence, as the condition or limitation of the promise contained in the second member. The reader will observe, that I have distinguished the different applications of the two conjunctions in this example by a difference in the character in which they are printed. I intend, for the sake of perspicuity, to adopt the same method in the other examples which are to be produced. But it is not copulatives only that may be thus combined with conditional particles. The causal, illative, and adversative, may all be employed in the same way. The first of these is exemplified in the following quotation: "Let us not say we keep the com- "mandments of the one, when we break the com- "mandments of the other. FOR *unless* we observe "both, we obey neither†." The above instances will serve to illustrate the observation in all other combinations with connectives of the same order. For an example of the like construction in the conjunction *that*, these words of the poet will suffice;

If there's a power above us;
AND *that* there is, all Nature cries aloud
Thro' all her works; he must delight in virtue‡.

* John xiv. 2, 3. † Hooker. ‡ Addison's Cato.

It is not material that the whole is here comprised in one sentence. The first conjunction serves to unite the member that precedes with that which follows; the second to exhibit the connection that subsists between the succeeding clauses. And what relation two connected complex sentences bear to the members of each, that relation bear the members of a complicated sentence to the clauses of which they consist. It was said, that the first of two conjunctions so placed is generally the connexive of the sentences, and that the second marks the relation subsisting between the members of the sentence which ensues. This holds generally, but not always. If the connective of the sentences be one of those particles, which, agreeably to the third observation, the idiom of the language permits us to transpose, it may properly possess the second place, and the other the first, as in the example following: "It "is of the utmost importance to us, that we asso- "ciate principally with the wise and virtuous. "*When*, THEREFORE, we choose our companions, "we ought to be extremely careful in regard to "the choice we make." The second conjunction THEREFORE is that which connects the sentences. The first conjunction *when* hath no relation to any thing beyond the second sentence. The only examples I have yet produced, are those wherein one of the conjunctions is by its nature always appropriated to the subordinate use of connecting

the parts of a sentence. But even where the two connectives are alike susceptible of both uses, the structure of the expression may sufficiently evince, that the one is employed solely to connect the sentence to what precedes in the discourse, and the other solely to conjoin the members, as in the following example: "Such is the probable conse-" quence of the measure I now recommend. BUT " *however* this may succeed, our duty is the same." Of the different applications of the two conjunctions in this passage, there cannot be the smallest doubt. Sometimes a decompound sentence may be ushered by no fewer than three successive conjunctions; the first being the connexive of the sentences; the second that which ascertains the relation of the members of the sentence thus introduced; the third that which indicates the connection of the clauses of the first member of that sentence, as in the subsequent example, "To " those who do not love God, the enjoyment of " him is unattainable. NOW AS *that* we may " love God, || it is necessary to know him; so " *that* we may know God, || it is necessary to " study his works." The conjunction NOW connects this period with the preceding sentence AS is expressive of the relation which the first member bears to the second, beginning with so; *that* indicates the dependence of the first clause of the first member, "we may love God," on the second clause, "it is necessary to know him;"

and corresponds to the conjunction *that*, which follows the so, in the beginning of the second member, and which, in like manner, indicates the dependence of the first clause of the second member, "we may know God," on the last clause, "it "is necessary to study his works." But though the introduction of two conjunctions having different references in the manner above explained, is perfectly compatible with the rules of good writing, and often inevitable; I cannot say so much for the admission of three, whose various applications must distract the attention, and so create a confusion and difficulty alike inconsistent with the principles of perspicuity, of vivacity, or of elegance.

Secondly, as to those cases wherein we cannot say propriety requires, but the idiom of the language permits the use of more than one connexive, they are either when the connexives are of the same order; for instance, in the copulatives, *and further, and in like manner;* in the adversatives, *but however;* in the exceptives, *yet nevertheless, yet notwithstanding.* With regard to such combinations we may safely pronounce, that if the use of synonymas even in the more significant parts of speech are for the most part incompatible with vivacity and strength, the like use in the more insignificant, and consequently weaker parts, must be still more exceptionable. Again, when the connectives are of different, but not opposite

orders, idiom often permits the concurrence of two, though the reference of both is the same; that is, though both are intended merely to connect the sentence with that which preceded. Thus the copulative is often combined with the illative, *and therefore*, or with a particle expressive of order, *and thirdly;* the causal with a particle expressing opposition, *for else, for otherwise;* a disjunctive with such a particle or phrase, *or on the contrary;* an adversative with an exceptive, *but yet;* a comparative with a copulative, *as also.* It were endless to enumerate all that idiom permits us in this manner to conjoin. It is only by attending to the practice of good authors, that it can perfectly be learnt. It is not to be questioned, that in some instances, the use of two connectives, though not absolutely necessary, may be expedient both for rounding the period, and for expressing more perfectly the relation of the sentences. But they are much more commonly the effect either of negligence, or of a vitiated taste in what concerns composition, and are often to be met with in the middling class of writers. The following will serve as an example of this manner: "*Although* he was "close taken up with the affairs of the nation, "*nevertheless* he did not neglect the concerns "of his friends." Either of the conjunctions would have done better than both. An author of this stamp will begin a sentence thus, "Where-

"as, on the other hand, supposing that"—Who sees not, that "If, on the contrary"—would express the same connection with more energy, as well as brevity? When a speaker interlards his discourse with such accumulated connectives, he always suggests to a judicious hearer, the idea of one that wants to gain time, till he cast about for something to say. Yet this fault is certainly more pardonable in speaking than in writing. The composer may take his own time, being under no necessity of writing faster than he can provide and dispose his materials. The slowness of his invention will not be betrayed to the reader by any method more readily than by that which the speaker is sometimes forced to use in order to conceal it.

Thirdly, as to those cases in which propriety itself forbids the concurrence of two conjunctions, it is impossible we should fall into a mistake. They are always distinguished by some repugnancy in the import of the words which even common sense shows to be incompatible. Such are a copulative with a disjunctive, a causal with an illative, a particle expressive of resemblance, with one expressive of contrariety.

Fourthly, as to those cases in which idiom alone forbids the concourse. These are to be learnt only by practice. Thus idiom permits the junction of a copulative with an illative particle, but never with a *causal*. We may say, *and therefore*, but not *and*

for. We are not to seek the reason of this difference in the import of the terms, but in the custom of applying them. Again, idiom permits the use of two copulatives, but not of every two. We may say, *and also*, *and likewise*, but not *also likewise*. Two causal conjunctions are not now associated, as *for because*, nor two illatives, as *therefore then*. Yet in the dialect which obtained in the beginning of the last century, these modes of expression were common. Indeed, some of those heavy connectives which are now but little used, as *moreover*, *furthermore*, *over and above*, are all but combinations of synonymous particles, and flow from a disposition which will perhaps ever be found to prevail where style is in its infancy.

The fifth and last observation I shall make on this subject, is, that it is not necessary, that all the sentences in any kind of composition should be linked together by connective particles. I know of no rules that have ever been laid down for our direction in this particular. But as it always hath been, so, for aught I can perceive, it always will be, left to taste alone to determine when these particles ought to be used, and when omitted. All that occurs to me as being of any service on this head, may be comprized in the two following remarks. The first is, that the illative conjunctions, the causal and the disjunctive, when they suit the sense, can more rarely be dispensed with than the copulative. The second is, that

the omission of copulatives always succeeds best, when the connection of the thoughts is either very close or very distant. It is mostly in the intermediate cases that the conjunction is deemed necessary. When the connection in thought is very distant, the copulative appears absurd, and when very close, superfluous. For the first of these reasons, it is seldom that we meet with it in the beginning of a chapter, section, or even paragraph, except in the Bible; and for the second, that it is frequently dropt in familiar narrative, where the connection is so obvious as to render it useless.

THE END.

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